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ABSTRACT

This book provides a historical overview of illiteracy as a social phenomenon in Belgium, examines public policies, and profiles literacy in the French and Flemish communities. It is organized in six chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of literacy in Belgium, with information on the educational system and cultural diversity. Chapter 2 reviews the problem of illiteracy and its elimination in Belgium in the context of general and adult education. Chapter 3 analyzes illiteracy in relation to the problems of failure at school, marginalization, and socio-educational rejection. Chapter 4 examines a number of government measures taken in different areas relating to illiteracy. Finally, chapters 5 and 6 describe the various literacy movements in the French and Flemish communities. (KC)

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UIE Studies on Functional Illiteracy
in Industrialized Countries 6

ED340916

FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY IN BELGIUM

Sylvie-Anne Goffinet
and Dirk Van Damme

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UIE Studies on Functional Illiteracy in Industrialized Countries 6

FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY IN BELGIUM

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FOREWORD

1990 - International Literacy Year

On the occasion of this International Year, the King Baudouin Foundation decided to collaborate in a large-scale information and awareness campaign on illiteracy. This publication is one of the tangible outcomes. Besides spreading awareness particularly through posters, leaflets distributed via post offices, and television advertisements, those responsible for the social programme of the King Baudouin Foundation felt that it was equally as important to prepare a text on which to base further action. That is the reason why, at the instigation of the Unesco Institute for Education, it asked two authors, one Dutch-speaking, Dirk Van Damme, and one French-speaking, Sylvie-Anne Goffinet, to write this book. It is published thanks also to the collaboration of Lire et Ecrire and Alfabetisering Vlaanderen, which coordinate literacy activities in their respective communities.

In addition to providing a historical overview of illiteracy as a social phenomenon in Belgium, the authors examine the policies of public authorities in this field, and devote one chapter each specifically to literacy measures in the French and Flemish communities.

We thank all those who have contributed to this publication for the care they have shown in its preparation.

King Baudouin Foundation

PREFACE

This monograph on the fight against illiteracy in Belgium demonstrates several excellent qualities: a profound analysis expressed in straightforward and concrete language; individual studies of experiences in the two language communities of the country, but a common perspective on social history and the nature of the problem; and simultaneous publication in the autumn of 1990 in the two principal languages of Belgium, with the later appearance of an English language translation.

Of particular note is the historical analysis of compulsory schooling, which makes clear that the continuous rise in access to schools between the eighteenth century and the 1950s disguises the very limited "success" among lower social classes throughout the period, marked by absenteeism, drop-out and failure. Since 1936, and particularly since 1970, socio-educational measures have therefore been taken with the intention of ensuring equality of opportunity. This is the background against which the authors write their history of adult literacy in Belgium.

The authors do not state the scale of the problem in exact quantitative terms. However, on the basis of sociological analyses of educational inequalities in schools, and of studies carried out in other industrialized countries where a rate of functional illiteracy in excess of 15% has been discovered, it is reasonable to hypothesise a similar situation in Belgium. Moreover, the study reported in chapter 3 on the "life stories of illiterates" already suggests a figure of 13% for Wallonia. The results of the research into this question launched by the Flemish Ministry of Education will enable a more exact estimate to be made of the real size of a problem which is already the subject of a thorough qualitative analysis here.

The monograph clarifies, for example, both the relationship between children's success in school and their social and family environment, and the varying gap between different social milieus and the culture of school--which leads to the intergenerational dimension of literacy. The study allows us to see school through the eyes of adults who, in their youth, felt rejected by it.

Finally, this book provides a description of the impact of the crisis of the welfare state on literacy policy, which was unfortunately being formulated at precisely the same moment. Voluntary organizations have been called upon to play a new role, as a supplement to the state. The Belgian example clearly shows the

impossibility of isolating literacy either from the questioning of the welfare state in industrialized societies, or from the policies of structural adjustment imposed on developing countries and the consequent crises in social policy in both North and South.

The Unesco Institute for Education thanks the two authors, Dirk Van Damme and Sylvie-Anne Goffinet, for their thoughtful contribution to our understanding of one of the key elements of the democratization of education, a contribution which rests on the collective experience of the two movements "Lire et Ecrire" and "Alfabetisering Vlaanderen".

We should also like to express appreciation for the collaboration of the King Baudouin Foundation in carrying out this project. We are happy to be associated with them in publishing this study.

In charge of the research programme at UIE has been Dr Adama Ouane, who co-ordinated this study, while Mr Peter Sutton has been responsible for editing and publication. We thank Ms Guyonne Proudlock for her English translation.

To all those who have helped to bring about the publication of this study I express my sincere thanks.

Paul Bélanger
Director
Unesco Institute for Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Belgian associations and institutions began providing adult literacy courses approximately ten years ago. At that time, they were working in isolation due to a lack of response from governments and the public as a whole. As in other industrialised countries, illiteracy was generally thought to have been eliminated as a result of compulsory education and modern training methods.

Now that 1990 has been declared International Literacy Year by UNESCO, the realities of illiteracy can no longer be ignored. The Belgian authorities have come to regard illiteracy as a genuine social problem and recognise the necessity to establish specific social and educational schemes (although there do exist significant differences of approach between authorities in the North and South of the country). In Flanders, the International Year coincides with a number of measures taken by the Executive in the area of adult education, whereas in the French Community the main emphasis is on employment.

The existing literacy movements have also highlighted the shortfalls of the education and social systems. They stress the fact that illiteracy is the joint result of educational failure, marginalisation and social rejection and that the creation of adult literacy schemes is therefore insufficient. They argue that fundamental reforms of the education system are necessary and that action should be taken in other social sectors. However, these demands have received little support from the authorities.

For this reason, we have chosen not only to describe the activities of the literacy movements of both the French and the Flemish communities, but also to analyse the literacy campaign in greater depth by placing it in a wider context.

Belgium is no longer in the forefront of the fight against illiteracy. Furthermore, its causes and characteristics are much the same in Belgium as they are in other industrialised countries. However, certain aspects of illiteracy and its elimination cannot easily be understood without some specific knowledge of the Belgian social and political structure.

Belgium is a relatively small country, with a population of 9 million. It is divided into two large linguistic and cultural communities, with 5.6 million Dutch-speaking people in the north and 3.2 million French-speaking people in the south. There is also a German-speaking community of no more than 65,000 in the east of the country. Although Brussels is situated in the Flemish part of the country, its population is mainly

francophone.

In addition to these community divisions there are regional divisions which are not based on language and culture but on geographical situation. There are three regions: the Flemish, the French and the Walloon regions.

There are approximately 900,000 immigrants in Belgium, 200,000 of whom originate from the Maghreb countries and Turkey. They have concentrated mainly in the cities of Brussels, Antwerp, Liège and Gent.

Linguistic and cultural divisions have not only had a strong influence on political life and political structures but also on education, continuing education and social and cultural life. For the last ten years, Belgium has been progressing in stages towards a type of federalism through successive constitutional revisions. The 1970 Revision recognised the Communities' cultural autonomy and granted cultural councils the power to formulate a social and cultural policy; the 1980 Revision established the Councils (legislative bodies) and the Executives and the 1988 Revision gave more powers to the regions and to the communities and federalised education. In Flanders, the regional and cultural Councils and the two Executives merged to form one Parliament and one Executive but the distinction between regional and community jurisdiction and affairs still exists. In the French-speaking region, there is a French Community Council and a Walloon Regional Council, each with its own separate Executive.

Currently, the regional and community authorities have jurisdiction in a large number of matters, but foreign affairs, economic and monetary policy, defence, most social affairs, employment and social security remain under national jurisdiction. Most matters pertaining to literacy come under regional and community jurisdiction. Cultural policy and continuing education have been under community jurisdiction since 1970, but social advancement courses remain under national jurisdiction. Since 1989, the education system has been entirely federalised from nursery school to university except for compulsory education, the minimum requirements for the granting of diplomas and the teachers' State pension scheme (which comes under the Social Security system).

Other factors, such as philosophical and ideological divisions have had, and still have, an influence on the adult education system. These divisions have resulted in 'educational warfare', the latest dissension leading to an 'Education Pact' between the denominational (Catholic) education network and the State (pluralist) education network. In cultural affairs, these philosophical and ideological divisions led to a 'Cultural Pact'.

These divisions remain nevertheless and still affect many areas of politics and public organisations. In Belgium, this phenomenon is called 'pillarisation' because there exist side by side a Catholic 'pillar', a socialist 'pillar' and a liberal 'pillar', each with its own hospitals, social institutions, workers' and farmers' associations, etc. In certain matters such as education the socialist and liberal pillars present a united secular front against the Catholic pillar. This explains the existence of two education systems in Belgium: a denominational (Catholic) education system and a State education system. These 'pillars', which act as intermediaries between the State and society, exert a great influence on the social, cultural and political life of the country, and literacy movements in both the Flemish and the French communities have been confronted with this phenomenon, albeit in very different ways.

There are, however, differences between North and South in this respect. In Flanders, the Catholic pillar is predominant, resulting in a greater development of denominational education and a Catholic socio-cultural life. In The Walloon region, where socialist tradition is stronger, the reverse situation is to be found. Inevitably, such differences have an impact on education and social and cultural policy in both communities.

Chapter 2 reviews the problem of illiteracy and its elimination in Belgium in the context of general and adult education. Chapter 3 analyses illiteracy in relation to the problems of failure at school, marginalisation and socio-educational rejection. Chapter 4 examines a number of government measures taken in different areas relating to illiteracy. Finally, chapters 5 and 6 describe the various literacy movements in the French and Flemish communities.

2. A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF ILLITERACY, PUBLIC EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION IN BELGIUM

2.1. Introduction

The astonishment caused by the 'rediscovery' of illiteracy is due in part to a lack of fundamental understanding of the history of illiteracy and the links which exist in this respect between the present and the past.[1] Modern thought on illiteracy, its elimination and the problems it poses would benefit from a clearer perception of its historical background, in particular its social, economic and cultural origins and the interwoven nature of oral and written culture. Such an approach also helps us to qualify the evolution of the literacy process and the close links between schooling and compulsory education on the one hand, and literacy on the other. For this reason, the present study on illiteracy and its elimination in Belgium begins with a brief review of a few important relevant historical points. At the same time, we wish to bring to light certain aspects of the history of public education and of the development of adult education which are necessary for a good understanding of the literacy process and policies relating to it.

2.2. Illiteracy as a historical phenomenon

2.2.1. The evolution of illiteracy

For centuries, only a minority of the population of the Belgian provinces was literate, as in the rest of Western Europe. Literacy and access to written language and culture were the prerogative of certain elites. "The witness having declared himself unable to write, hereinafter appends his signature...": this official declaration concluded by a cross - which for historians of the pre-industrial period was often the only indication of the existence of illiteracy - bore witness to the existence of a social and cultural dimension from which written language was absent.

However, illiteracy was not evenly distributed among the population. Towards the end of the 18th century, illiteracy was more widespread among women than men (63% of women against 39% of men); if children are included, these percentages can be

increased by 20%. Illiteracy was also more widespread in the country than in towns; moreover, apart from Luxembourg, it was greater in Flanders than in Wallonia. Occupation and social class clearly played an important role. These differences added up, so that at the extremes, illiteracy among Flemish women living in rural areas reached 75%, compared to 35% among Walloon men living in towns.[2]

There were also considerable regional differences. Around 1785, the percentage of men able to sign their marriage certificate varied from approximately 30% in Audenaerde to 60% in Furnes.[3] Illiteracy was therefore a very varied phenomenon and could on no account be discussed as a general problem. There could be wide variations not only within communities but even within the family unit. This pattern of variations was not specific to Belgium; it extended to the whole of Western Europe.[4]

In the 19th century, the progression of literacy was far from linear. In the first half of the century, there was a significant drop in the number of illiterates in Belgium, but Industrialisation and pauperisation subsequently left their clear mark in the provinces as well as the towns. Many children were employed as labour in industry and at home, resulting in a decrease in school attendance and an increase in illiteracy. From 1797 to 1815, only 30% of the married working class population in southern Flanders signed their marriage certificate, 22% from 1831 to 1850 and a mere 12% from 1851 to 1870.[5] Poverty and illiteracy clearly went hand in hand.

Towards the middle of the century, approximately 50% of Belgian army recruits were illiterate. This figure corresponded more or less to the average European percentage. Table 2.1 shows the different illiteracy statistics for that period.[6] The increase in literacy is greatest among women, so that towards the end of the century, there was virtually no difference at all between men and women.

	1866	1880	1890	1900	1910
Men	50	60	64	69	74
Women	44	55	60	67	75
Total	47	58	62	68	75

Table 2.1. Illiteracy rates for the adult Belgian population

Exluding children under the age of 15, almost 20% of the population was still illiterate in 1900, and more than 13% in 1910. Illiteracy was at that time most widespread among the older population: in 1900 40% of people above the age of 40 were illiterate.

During the first half of the 20th century, the literacy trend continued to increase. According to census figures, 8% of the Belgian population over the age of 15 was illiterate in 1920, 6% in 1930 and just above 3% in 1947. Age and gender were still then significant factors of variation. In 1947, for example, only 0.9% of young people between the ages of 15 and 20 were illiterate compared to 8.5% of people aged over 60. Census figures after 1947 do not reflect these variations.[7]

These figures show that the great majority of the Belgian population was literate towards the middle of the 20th century. However, these official figures can be deceptive. The experiences of the movement towards literacy have shown that the population of Belgium and indeed of other industrialised countries had not become fully literate in the second half of the 20th century.

2.2.2. Illiteracy, oral culture and written language.

Not only must existing statistics on illiteracy be considered with care, but one must also be aware that they only reflect one aspect of the situation. In order to fully understand the role of written language and the nature of illiteracy in the past, it is important to consider the complex role of written language in its social and cultural context. The culture of working class communities was essentially oral. Oral communication was central to working-class culture and collective memory. However, this does not imply that written language was absent from working-class culture. Revisionist historians have qualified the nature of the division between literacy and illiteracy, stressing the existence of forms of semi-literacy and the lack of a clear division between oral and written forms of communication.[8] The written form did in fact have a part to play in the culture of mostly illiterate communities. During the pre-industrial period, pamphlets, almanacs and other popular writings had a wide circulation; written language also played a role in religious practices and in education, even though people were not fully literate. A more collective form of reading was taking place, which meant that written language did impregnate the popular culture of illiterate communities through the reading of texts in markets, taverns, etc. In short, there was no longer a clear division between written language and the oral culture of

communities which were mostly illiterate.

The origins and causes of the transition from a mostly oral culture to a predominantly written one in Western Europe are varied. Among other factors, a number of economic factors have encouraged the development of writing skills, such as commercial transactions, which played an increasing role among middle-class and working-class people, due to the growth of capitalism. The development of modern States with their bureaucracies and their armies was another important contributing factor. Many illiterate people came into contact with written language in the army, and communication between citizens and the State's institutions was increasingly made in writing through public notices or the collection of taxes. In addition, the growth of the printing industry led to the mass distribution of printed texts, particularly the Bible, in popular language: religion was largely responsible for promoting the development of literacy. A number of authors have also stressed the important part played by the cultural and educational ambitions and aspirations of populations who believed reading and writing skills to be essential for participation in cultural, political and social life.

Access to literacy was therefore the result of the combination of different factors. The family unit and the local community played a fundamental role in spreading literacy as well as oral culture. Both the Protestant and the Catholic Church were responsible for providing ordinary people with rudimentary reading skills. The role of informal educational contexts in the pre-industrial period and even in the 19th century must not be underestimated. However, there is no doubt that formal education has been the most important factor in the elimination of illiteracy.

2.3. The role of education in the elimination of illiteracy

According to A. D'Haenens, the development of literacy is primarily due to formal education.[9] It is through the primary school system that written language comes to dominate society and control communication. Constant indications of the promotion of literacy can be found from medieval religious education, colleges or local schools right up to modern educational institutions. For this reason, a study of the literacy process in Belgium must include a brief review of the development of public education.

2.3.1. The development of public education in Belgium in the 19th century[10]

Until late in the 19th century, religious authorities retained control of all matters related to public education. The establishment of local parish schools, Sunday schools, schools for the poor, and other schools in Belgium was due to the counter-reformation policies of the Catholic Church in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is therefore hardly surprising that instruction in the religious and moral precepts related to it should have played such a crucial role. The teaching of reading and writing through religious teaching began later: teaching children to read went hand in hand with the memorising of religious scriptures, while writing was rarely taught in schools.

Before the French Revolution, public authorities relied on the efforts of the Church to provide public education, only because they considered it to be a useful means of maintaining public order and discipline. Of greater interest to them was the creation and development of small schools or apprenticeship workshops for the poor, where children would be taught such skills as spinning, weaving, bobbin lace-making etc., in addition to a minimum basic education. These establishments provided the State with a cheap and efficient work force. Apart from the promising decree of Queen Marie-Therese in 1774, the French Revolutionaries were the first to consider that public education was the responsibility of the State. Influenced by the educational thinking of the Age of Enlightenment, they wished to establish a new system of primary schools where, in addition to being taught republican principles, children would be given a comprehensive education. In practice, this policy produced very few results, no more than did William 1st's attempts to encourage primary education.

With the 1830 Belgian Revolution, this centralist and innovatory educational policy was soon forgotten and replaced by the principle of the freedom of education. As a result, the Catholic Church had once more a free hand in matters of public education, and financial support from the State. The 1842 Primary Education Act made the situation official, giving the clergy complete control, not only in its own schools, but also in local State schools. Nevertheless, the Education Act did not entirely prevent the qualitative decline of public education in Belgium after the Belgian Revolution.

Towards the middle of the 19th century, education was therefore dominated by a single ideology, that of the Roman Catholic Church. As a result, education was based on a rigid social hierarchy model according to which every citizen does his

duty and humbly accepts his condition. The 'moral' education of a class labelled as 'inferior' took precedence over basic education and implied a religion-oriented education system. The transmission of knowledge was controlled by dogma and did not go beyond the teaching of a little reading, writing and arithmetic. In spite of their political opposition, the Liberals never questioned the educational validity of this conservative social and political ideology. They too upheld the image of the ordinary citizen as morally inferior and virtually bestial, who, thanks to discipline and a moral education - the preaching ground of the Church - finally submitted to the rules of a bourgeois society.

Nevertheless, for a proportion of the liberal bourgeoisie and the rising middle classes, this ideology did not appear to provide a solution to the educational problems of the times. From the 50's onwards, a new generation of intellectuals proposed a different, competing educational ideology, no longer based on moral submission, but on the transfer of knowledge and cultural improvement. Radical liberals made a connection between educational inequalities and social inequalities: ignorance was the cause of the inferiority of the lower classes, education the reason for the superiority of middle-class bourgeoisie. Education therefore became the key to a higher social status. Schooling thus played a crucial role in individual development; special educational measures were encouraged, and where the lower classes were concerned, schools were expected as far as possible to play a compensatory role, counteracting the deficiencies created by the social background. In terms of educational policy, this meant the establishment of an education system which would be free, compulsory and under secular control. It also created the need for well-trained and qualified teachers.

This radical liberal educational ideology, supported by organisations such as the League for Education formed in 1864 and by other progressive educational groups in the large Liberal-dominated cities, was finally implemented as an official educational policy in 1878 after the Liberal electoral victory. A Ministry for Education was created and much attention was given to projects aimed at renovating and improving primary education, culminating in the 1879 Liberal Education Act, which secularised, centralised and innovated the education system. As a result, Catholic control of primary public education was greatly reduced and the scheme was completed with the introduction of curricula that were very definitely intended to promote knowledge. The reaction of the Catholic Church against these reforms was particularly strong and provoked the most serious conflict in Belgian history. The Church used its influence on the population

to bring more power to its elbow in its fight against what it called the 'godless' education system. State schools were boycotted and the network of Catholic schools extended in every possible way.

After the Catholic election victory in 1884, which marked the start of a succession of Catholics in power until the First World War, a new Education Act immediately came into force, re-establishing the previous situation. In 1895, a new law on primary education was voted, giving the Catholic Church complete control of education via the granting of subsidies to the State system. As a result, the Belgian education system finally acquired its rigid character.

In spite of the intense political and educational conflict, it was clear that a number of new educational ideas were finding their way into the education system. While the teaching of moral precepts and the maintenance of public order, increasingly brought into question by the rise of socialism, remained in the forefront of the system, the acquisition of knowledge took on much more importance. The educational conflict reflected the increasing importance of public education in society, as did the expansion of primary education.

At the turn of the 20th century, the social functions of public education began to progress. Industrialisation and economic growth gave education the role of providing workers with qualifications, and indeed the increase in better skilled labour helped economic growth. Education also began to play a significant part in determining social status. For working-class children, the possibility of attaining a good social status through education remained small, but gradually the meritorious character of education appeared. The lower classes began to realise that it could help them improve their living conditions. This positive attitude towards education was also present in the growing workers' movement which, like the Radical Liberals, was in favour of a free and compulsory education system. A number of up-and-coming social groups also supported an education system based on merit. For example, the Flemish middle classes gave priority to education in order to create a Flemish elite and thereby satisfy Flemish aspirations against a State led by francophones. Finally, education also contributed towards the social integration of the working classes. Along with social legislation, welfare and housing policies, and the various efforts on the part of the different political and ideological pillars to rally the support of the working classes, education led to the pacification of the working classes and their intergration into bourgeois society.

As a result of these changes, education, and particularly

written language came to play a central part in social life. Schools mirrored the societal model and at the same time the role of written language and culture was strengthened. It was through school that one learned the dominant and written culture and language, and due to the social prestige education provided, literacy became essential to social integration. A lack of writing skills could therefore lead to marginalisation and social rejection.

2.3.2. School attendance and compulsory education

The high priority given to education has never been a general phenomenon. Education and school attendance have always conflicted with many other social considerations. Education has had to fight its way to its present status against many other, often opposing, interests. This process can be clearly seen throughout the history of school attendance and compulsory education.

Towards the end of the 19th century, school attendance had greatly increased. The number of children attending primary school doubled between 1843 and 1878, and increased again by 36% between 1878 and 1914. Taking into account population growth, there was a 14.5% increase in the number of children attending primary school between 1875 and 1900. In 1845, one child in three between the ages of 7 and 14 had never attended school; one in four in 1875. Furthermore, it is not at all certain that the majority of children attended school regularly. Absenteeism was particularly frequent in the provinces. In 1875, there was a difference of 12% in the school population between summer and winter, decreasing to 5% by 1911. Nor did children complete primary school. In 1900, approximately 5% of children completed six whole years, while 35% only completed four years and 50% under four years.[11] In the industrial town of Gent, the increase in school attendance had very little effect on the average age of school children, which remained at nine and a half years.[12] In addition to these statistics, poor or irregular school attendance was compensated to some extent by Sunday school and school for adults, both of which became very popular during the second half of the 19th century, particularly with working-class children and young people.

School attendance was closely linked to socio-economic interests and considerations. Primary school and nursery school were considered by many parents, especially working mothers, simply as day-care nurseries for their children. Above all, parents wanted their children to be looked after, particularly

the youngest. On the other hand, older children were taken out of school as soon as they were old enough to work and contribute to the family income. Child labour was clearly responsible for reducing school attendance. In industry, at home or in agriculture, where children were a source of cheap labour, easily available and docile, in the working-class families themselves who relied on their children's income for survival, child labour was an unquestionable social reality which could not in any way be altered by, or in favour of, education. In other words, public education was strongly conditioned by the necessity to use child labour.

It is in the light of this social reality that the social and political issues concerning compulsory education must be discussed. In Belgium, the progress towards compulsory education was fraught with difficulties and finally became law much later than in other Western European countries.[13] Compulsory education was already on the agenda in Parliament in 1859 and a first bill was drafted by the Liberals in 1872, but conservatives on both the Catholic and the Liberal side proved reticent. The Catholics viewed compulsory education as a constraint upon the freedom of education and as an illicit intrusion by the State into parents' authority. They were also horrified by the idea of a State education defended by the Liberals. The conservative Liberals felt that making child labour illegal would endanger industrial growth. The only way envisaged by the powerful elites to encourage school attendance was to make education free for needy families. The number of non-paying pupils increased from 46% in 1845 to 95% in 1911. Nevertheless, it was precisely this social group which attended school on an irregular and infrequent basis.

Compulsory education therefore implied a ban on the use of child labour, which was only introduced in 1889 in a limited fashion. The 1889 Law regulated the employment of women and children in industry, but not in crafts, in agriculture or in the home where it remained unrestricted. Nevertheless, it represented an important step forward, due both to the change in industrial regulations which limited the economic advantages of employing children, and to the increasing concern of the middle-class intelligentia over such issues as individual integrity, ignorance and the distress of children.

From 1890 onwards, the pressure on the Conservatives to accept compulsory education increased. It was defended not only by a number of radical Liberals but also by the Socialists and the Christian Democrats. Considerations of a political nature also meant that the more conservative Liberals started to accept the idea. However, the debate on compulsory education was closely linked to the question of the relationship between

denominational and State education. It is only in 1914 that the question of compulsory education was finally settled for children under the age of 14 with a new law on primary education. Due to the war, the law only became effective in 1921. In practice, it was difficult to enforce school attendance. Many working-class families saw compulsory education as a threat and retained a hostile or indifferent attitude towards education, which often took the form of absenteeism. A solicitous permissiveness on the part of doctors and the authorities concerned meant that, for a long time, this absenteeism was to some extent tolerated.

The law on compulsory education was the result, rather than the cause of an increase in school attendance. It came too late to effectively stimulate the education of children in Belgium and simply played a part in the last stages of the progress towards generalised public education. The real causes were the changes in the labour market and the economic world, and a general acceptance of the important role of education. Compulsory education also greatly supported schools in their protective role towards weaker and easily influenced children, against idleness and other harmful influences. This preoccupation was also clearly reflected in the partial extension of the school leaving age to 16 in 1935 as a result of massive youth unemployment. The extension of the school leaving age in 1983 can be viewed in the same perspective.

Compulsory education and universal school attendance having finally been achieved in the 20th century, there was a shift of emphasis from primary to secondary education, the former having by then become the first stage in a much more extensive educational system. Progressive educational experts increasingly turned their attention to the problem of the participation of the lower classes in secondary education, to the democratisation of education and to the problem of equal opportunity. At the same time, the disadvantages of the lower classes in education took on a different aspect: non-existant or poor attendance were replaced by poor school results.

2.3.3. The quality of education

School attendance and compulsory education did not result in widespread literacy. Many factors hampered the quality of education in 19th century schools. Classes were often overcrowded and resources insufficient. Teachers often lacked proper training. In 1860, no more than 22% of teachers were qualified, 59% in 1878 and as many as 87% in 1911. Moreover, teaching was not an enviable profession and the fight for better

conditions and resources remained a crucial issue throughout the 19th and even the 20th century.

The educational process was also probably determined by survival strategies. Classroom life was ruled by authoritarian and repressive methods in order to ensure the unconditional obedience of pupils. Apart from absenteeism and open agression, children from lower-class backgrounds often developed very astute strategies in resistance to an educational system which they resented and which was foreign to them. Schools therefore became a place of social and cultural conflict. Schools reflected the values of bourgeois society, either in the moralistic form of the Catholic educational ideology, or according to the meritocratic ideology of the radical liberal intelligentia. To many working-class children, the subjects and the values which were being taught were alien to their own specific social environment and culture. Such serious cultural contradictions had the effect of limiting the potential of school education.

Educational reform in the 19th century concentrated on curricula, disciplines and inspection. In progressive educational areas, particularly in cities, attempts were made to improve the quality of education in State schools, but these were often limited to the improvement of material resources and conditions such as classroom equipment, hygiene and school meals. During the first decade of this century, efforts to improve the quality of education concentrated greatly on research in child educational psychology, particularly in relation to so-called 'retarded' children, who were in fact the victims of the moralistic stigmatisation of lower-class children who experienced difficulties in becoming integrated into the school system.

In the 20's and 30's, the circulation of new educational ideas prompted a new surge of interest in educational reform. Journals and organisations put forward ideas for the ideal education system, which would relate to the child's real-life experience, stimulate independence and lead to a harmonious development based on individual aptitudes. It resulted in the new education programme of 1936, based on the ideas of Ovide Decroly. The first two levels of primary education were to include environmental studies through active observation and a general education based on the child's specific interests. It was only after the Second World War that a real reform of primary education was implemented, due to the resistance to the new scheme which implicitly questioned past educational compromises. However, a number of innovatory educational ideas had already been put into practice, having reached schools through different channels, and thus contributed to the creation of a school environment which provided children with better educational

opportunities.

School attendance having become almost universal, the improvement in the quality of primary education in post-war Belgium meant that formal education had finally become the main instrument of socialisation and literacy. It must be stressed however that this process was only achieved very recently, that it was irregular and determined by a series of conflicting social forces and interests. These same social factors explain why still today, illiteracy has not completely disappeared, in spite of the fact that school attendance is almost universal.

2.4. The history of continuing education in Belgium

Apart from schools, there existed in the 19th and 20th centuries a number of alternative projects and organisations dealing with public education. These must also be included in our discussion, not only because they reveal the preoccupation of certain elites with the 'ignorance' of the working classes, but also because these very diverse forms of educational activity have probably played a significant role in the literacy process.[15]

From the 18th century onwards, there were in Belgium as in other Western European countries, a number of social groups which considered that the intellectual and cultural level of the lower classes constituted a problem and that the situation could be improved by the introduction of post-school education and other forms of public education. In their eyes, the social question, which was to become a great 19th century preoccupation, was essentially a moral and cultural question: to them, the ignorance, the lack of morality and culture of the working classes was at the core of the social problem; but the various political and ideological trends of the time viewed the content of public education very differently.

For the Catholics, post-school education had to complement the moralising role of schooling, or compensate for its absence. The principal means of achieving this aim was patronage, which offered young adults moral protection against the harmful influences of their environment and provided an alternative to drink and idleness. Real cultural and intellectual improvement were not aimed at.

There were on the other hand a series of progressive liberal initiatives specifically intended to improve the cultural and intellectual level of the lower classes. Because the social problem was seen to have originated in the ignorance of the lower classes, solutions to the problem were found in the transfer of 'useful' knowledge and access to middle-class culture. In this

respect it is worth mentioning a Dutch association: the 'Maatschappij tot Nut van't Algemeen', which had a number of active sections in this country at the beginning of the 19th century. It almost completely disappeared during the Belgian Revolution, but later served as a model for many projects, among them, the Flemish 'Willemsfonds', created in 1851, and the 'Ligue de l'Enseignement', created in 1864. What characterised these associations and a number of others which existed at the time, was their launching of projects and activities such as public conferences, excursions, musical and theatrical events and public libraries. Educational leisure activities went hand in hand with the transfer of useful and cultural knowledge.

Public libraries played an important part in this context. Although they already existed in this country, mostly as a result of a decree during the French occupation in 1795, proper public libraries were mainly created in the second half of the 19th century, under the impetus given by the associations mentioned above. The 'Willemsfonds' library was opened to the public in Gent in 1865. A survey conducted by the 'Ligue de l'Enseignement' counted up to 53 local public libraries and 32 libraries managed by associations. There were in addition libraries which were attached to primary or adult schools. Estimates suggest that in 1879 in Belgium there was one library for every 13,000 citizens.[15] The number continued to increase during the last decade of the 19th century.

Very little is still known about the real impact of these different initiatives on literacy. One hypothesis is that, with the exception of leisure activities, they had more impact on a working-class elite, parts of the middle classes and the small bourgeoisie, than they had on the working classes themselves.

At the turn of the century, the public education effort became increasingly involved with political tensions and conflict. Let us start by discussing existing tensions between the Catholics and the Liberals. The 1870's saw the forming of a rift within the Willemsfonds which resulted in the creation of the separate Davidsfonds by the Catholics in 1875. This event marked the start of the politicisation of the public education process in Belgium. It became increasingly engaged in the struggle of the Flemish Movement against French domination in State and public affairs. In its hopes of emancipation, the Dutch-speaking small bourgeoisie developed a keen interest in all sorts of educational and cultural projects that might possibly further the intellectual and cultural level of the Flemish population and thereby confirm the respectability of the Dutch language. Central to Flemish cultural nationalism ('Cultuurflamingantisme') was a great interest in public education and education in general

with the aim of forming an elite and retrieving 'poor Flanders' from its isolation and backwardness.

The challenge posed by the workers' movement, the Social Democratic Party and its organisations to bourgeois society, as well as the democratisation of social structures, also had a great impact on the public education process. It became necessary to integrate workers and peasants ideologically and culturally into bourgeois society and to ensure that middle-class political parties had mass appeal. The Catholics and the Christian Democrats were more successful than the Liberals in following the Social Democratic example and in creating their own workers' associations as well as establishing modern political and cultural organisations. As a result, many social and cultural organisations were created in Belgium before and after the First World War. These public organisations integrated large sections of the population into political life and created an intermediary between the State and society.

When the authorities, during the interwar period, began gradually to take an interest in public education policies, they relied on the support of these private initiatives. As a result, Belgian social and cultural policy is based on the phenomenon of 'pillarisation' and the financial support provided by the State to these pillar institutions. It is fundamental to the concept of subsidised freedom of education. Flanders, with its Catholic majority, was more affected by this phenomenon than the Walloon region where State initiatives were more prominent, particularly in districts and provinces which were predominantly socialist. While it is possible to speak of a Government policy on public education, it was mainly the result of socialist initiatives. Among these are the 1921 Public Libraries Act, the Royal Decree in the same year on post-school educational grants, and the private bill on the creation of a National Workers' Leisure Organisation, finally realised in 1936.

After the Second World War, the pillars and political factions re-established themselves quite rapidly and once again developed social, cultural and educational associations and institutions. In the 1950's and 60's, the period of pacification that followed the educational conflict, along with the Educational Pact and the Royal Question, finally established and strengthened in Belgium the existence of different power blocks. This trend had the support of the Government, although the ideas on continuing education which were increasinly being expressed at international level created a certain awareness of the problem. However, a real cultural and adult education policy was only adopted after the question of the two Communities had been resolved.

Indeed the most important change of that period was the development of cultural independence for the two Communities. Already in the early sixties, there were two separate Ministries and two separate administrations. With the 1970 revision of the constitution, cultural autonomy was definitely introduced and legislative Cultural Councils were formed in each Community. These had jurisdiction over social and cultural policy and adult education. The policies of the two communities are discussed in section 4.4.1.

NOTES

1. Cf. Van Damme, D. 1987. "Contradicties van alfabetisering. Historische en vormingspolitieke bij een actueel 'probleem'." *Comenius* 7 (1): 3-26.
   See also publications by Harvey Graff, e.g. Graff, H.J. 1987. *The Legacies of Literacy*. Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

2. Ruwet, J. and Wellemans, Y. 1978. *L'analphabétisme en Belgique (XVIIIème-XIXème siècles)*. Louvain and Leiden: Bibliothèque de l'Université and E.J. Brill: 23-28.

3. Vandenbroeke, C. and Aelgoet, G. 1977. "Alfabetisme in Vlaanderen en inzonderheid in Zuidelijk Vlaanderen (einde 18de eeuw tot 1870)". In *Vijfde Jaarboek van Geschied- en Heemkindige Kring der Gaverstreke*: 154-155.

4. See among others the following synthesis: Maynes, M.J. 1985. *Schooling in Western Europe. A Social History*. Albany, NY: State University of New York at Albany Press: 11-20.

5. Ibid.

6. De Clerck, K., Simon, F. and De Graeve, B. 1984. *Dag Meester, goedemorgen zuster, goedmiddag juffrouw. Facetten van het volksonderwijs in Vlaanderen (1830-1890)*. Tielt: Lannoo: 67.

7. Ruwet and Wellemans (see Note 2): 45-48.

8. Apart from Graff and Maynes, see: Houston, R. 1983. "Literacy and Society in the West." *Social History* 8: 269-293.
   Also Van Damme (see Note 1).

9. D'Haenens, A. 1986. "De lagere school in de lange duur van het Westen." In: *De lagere school in België van de Middeleeuwen tot nu*. Brussels: ASLK: 7-22.

10. Cf. a number of syntheses, e.g.:
    De Clerck et al. (see Note 6); D'Haenens (Note 9);
    De Vroede, M. 1978. "Onderwijs 1840-1878" and "Onderwijs 1878-1914." In: *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* Vol. 13. Bussum: Fibula: 111-125 and 328-351.

11. De Vroede, M. 1987. "Uitbreding van het onderwijs 1842-1918." In *De lagere school in België van de Middeleeuwen tot nu.* Brussels: ASLK: 74.

12. Steels, M. 1978. *Geschiedenis van het stedelijk onderwijs te Gent. 1878-1914.* Gent: 243-244.

13. De Vroede, M. 1970. "De weg naar de algemene leerplicht in België." *Tijdschrift voor opvoedkunde* 15: 321-347.

14. Cf. Harrop, S.A. 1984. "Adult education and literacy. The importance of post-school education for literacy levels in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." *History of Education* Vol 13: 191-205.

15. Van Aelbrouck. 1956. *Education populaire*: 30.

3. ILLITERACY IN BELGIUM AS A SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we wish to analyse illiteracy as a social phenomenon, to the extent that available data will permit. We begin by presenting a number of statistical data and dividing illiterate people into groups, with the help of two types of case history. Educational failure in Belgium is then analysed as one of the main causes of illiteracy. A number of issues relating to reading and the teaching of reading are discussed in depth. Finally, we analyse how illiteracy came to be a generally recognised social problem.

3.2. Illiteracy

3.2.1. The extent of illiteracy

THE BELGIAN POPULATION

The rediscovery of illiteracy in Belgium was made via various channels, maintaining contact with the sections of the public concerned, making the Government and the public aware of the problem. In 1983 the organisation 'Lire et Ecrire' attempted to evaluate the extent of the problem with the help of the only available data, army statistics (drawn up on the basis of tests given to army recruits).[1] These figures cover the whole of the country (see Table 3.1). For the whole contingent, the average annual rate of total illiteracy is 0.35% and 1.53% for semi-illiteracy. These figures are optimistic however, for they only include young men who are able to serve in the army. The proportion of illiterates is not the same for different categories of the population such as women, the elderly and the handicapped.

By extrapolation to the rest of the Belgian population,[2] the number of illiterates on 1st March 1981 reached 8,970,070, at least 31,000 of whom were completely illiterate (exactly 31,395) and 137,000 were semi-illiterate (exactly 137,242). Table 3.2 shows these figures applied to the different regional populations.

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	% average
1. Complete illiterates						
French-speaking						
tot.	108	97	73	59	47	
%	0,67	0,61	0,48	0,37	0,29	0,484
Dutch-speaking						
tot.	81	68	54	64	75	
%	0,30	0,27	0,21	0,25	0,30	0,266
2. Partial illiterates						
French-speaking						
tot.	492	499	450			
%	3,07	3,14	2,95			3,05
Dutch-speaking						
tot.	185	109	167			
%	0,70	0,44	0,65			0,60

Table 3.1. Army statistics for complete and partial illiteracy

	complete illit.	partial illit.
Wallonia	13.615	85.799
Flanders	14.358	32.386
Brussels	3.422	19.057
Belgium	31.395	137.242

Table 3.2 Extrapolations

THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION

The last general census of 1st March 1981 recorded 878.577 immigrants in Belgium. The main national distribution of these immigrants is shown in Table 3.3.

For a number of them, some official illiteracy figures are available, but it is not certain how these were established. Furthermore they relate to the situation in the country of origin and are not always up-to-date figures. They cannot be simply applied as they are to the immigrant populations of Belgium. The statistics given below are therefore mentioned on a purely indi-

cative basis and cannot be considered as wholly representative. Bearing in mind these reservations, if these percentages are extrapolated to the whole of the Belgian immigrant population, the final figure is 139,000 (138,985) illiterates of foreign origin (see Table 3.4).

Country of origin	Belgium	Brussels	Wallonia	Flanders
Italy	279.700	35.809	213.409	30.482
Morocco	105.133	57.874	17.124	30.135
France	103.512	25.759	60.311	17.442
Netherlands	66.233	4.566	7.405	54.262
Turkey	63.587	15.820	17.076	30.691
Spain	58.255	28.156	19.338	10.761

Table 3.3. Immigrant population
Source: I.N.S. General census, 01.03.1981

Country of origin	Belgium	Brussels	Wallonia	Flanders
Italy	14.544	1.862	11.097	1.585
Morocco	82.634	45.489	13.459	23.686
France	5.176	1.288	3.016	872
Netherlands	2.649	183	296	2.170
Turkey	25.244	6.281	6.779	12.184
Spain	8.738	4.223	2.901	1.614
TOTAL	138.985	59.326	37.548	42.111

Table 3.4. Extrapolations for the immigrant population

THE WHOLE POPULATION

According to all these figures, there are 308,000 (307,622) illiterates in Belgium (81,805 in Brussels, 136,962 in the Walloon region and 88,855 in Flanders); both these totals should be treated with caution, bearing in mind the bias introduced by the different extrapolations. In addition there are the functional illiterates, who have formally learned to read and write but who have difficulties using these skills in everyday life.

The authorities have never attempted to obtain a more precise view of the situation. No related data can be found in the census details and no systematic surveys have been carried out as they have for example in Great Britain, France or Canada.

With this lack of precise information, Alfabetisering Vlaanderen and Lire et Ecrire have respectively put forward the following illiteracy figures: 300,000 in the Flemish community and 3-500,000 in the French community, a total of 6-800,000 illiterates in the whole country. These figures have never been contradicted by the authorities. In June 1984, the Minister of Francophone Education quoted the statistics of Lire et Ecrire in a meeting of the Ministers of Education of EEC Member States.

Very recently, the authorities have recognised that the availability of precise figures on the extent of illiteracy is essential. In the context of International Literacy Year, the Minister of Flemish Education has called for research aimed at producing precise illiteracy figures for Flanders.

3.2.2. What makes a person illiterate?

Literacy courses have increased public awareness of the problem. In 1985, Lire et Ecrire carried out a survey on learners in five Member States of the European Community: Belgium, Great Britain, France, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany. In the present study, we shall of course only concern ourselves with the data relating to Belgium.

THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND ILLITERACY

The above mentioned survey carried out on people who experienced the compulsory education system (in one of the Member States), yielded information on the level of education of adult illiterates.

The results show that 96% of students participating in the survey had attended primary school and 53% had attended secondary school; but only 51% of them had completed their primary school

education and of those, only 33% had obtained the final primary school certificate. Furthermore, only 25% felt that they could read well at the end of primary school and only 16% felt that they could write well. These figures indicate that there is no precise correlation between obtaining the certificate and the ability to master such basic skills as reading and writing, since only 47% of subjects having obtained the certificate said that they could read at the end of primary school and on the other hand, 44% of subjects who said that they could read at the end of primary school had not obtained the certificate.

30% of subjects were guided towards remedial schooling at primary school level. The mastery of reading skills at the end of remedial education is 13%, half what it is at the end of ordinary primary education.

The rate of re-integration into ordinary education after remedial education is very poor (25%) and the success rate after re-integration is even lower (15% i.e. 2% of those who went into remedial education). These figures show that remedial education is not an effective system. Adults' estimates of the age at which they left school also provide useful information. A large proportion of the sample left school relatively early: 57% before the age of 13 (which is the normal age for leaving primary school), 32% before the age of 8 (i.e. during the first two years of primary school).

In addition, 49% of the sample had a feeling of rejection during their schooling period. All these factors combine to reinforce the fact that for the native population, illiteracy is not the consequence of a lack of education, but primarily the result of failure and learning difficulties in primary education; this was the case of 50% to 75% of the sample, on the basis of certain variables.

The survey also tried to evaluate the phenomenon of relapse into illiteracy (people who acquired reading and writing skills during their school years and who later on lost them, mainly because they did not use them in their adult life). Generally in this case, there is a certain correlation between the level of literacy at the end of primary (and secondary school) and the level of literacy on enrolment in a literacy course. Adults who could read and write well on completion of primary (and secondary) education, remain able to read and write, with more or less ease or difficulty; adults who could read a little are only able to read simple words and find it difficult to read a text. Those who were completely illiterate vary between being completely unable to read and being able to read a text with difficulty. Apart from this general trend, the survey indicates a rate of

relapse into illiteracy of 13% for reading. This would be greater for writing skills which are less common than reading skills among poorly educated people.

These figures indicate that adult illiteracy is only marginally due to late illiteracy and that it is primarily due to failure at school and to leaving school prematurely.

SCHOOL, SOCIAL AND FAMILY LIFE AMONG ILLITERATES

The sense of rejection felt by 49% of the sample during their school years reveals that they were victims of discrimination as children: "Because I had been late since the beginning of the year, I was put at the back of the classroom"; "Teachers were not interested in me because I had difficulties in learning"; "Some of the teachers deliberately made fun of me in front of the whole class"; "When I was asked a question which I couldn't answer, I was sent out". The education system separates children into categories: there are those who learn and those who don't. In some cases, the judgement holds no possibility of appeal: "Because I was considered good for nothing, they would give me a nought before I had started writing".

This type of discrimination (spatial, verbal and punitive) places a child apart in the eyes of his peers. It is as though the aim was to protect the 'good' pupil against a possible contagion and repress the 'bad' pupil in order to make him realise the extent of his divergence from the norm.

In addition to discrimination based on learning abilities, there is discrimination based on differences in social status: "When the subject matter was financial, rich children were always placed at the front of the class, the others at the back could not hear as well".

While discrimination at school is more clearly noticeable in teaching practice, it also permeates relationships between children, as though a branding system is in operation: "Because of the competitive nature of the system, other children did not include me in their circles, because I did not look serious enough".

At a micro-sociological level, this corresponds to A. Van Haecht's macro-sociological analysis:

> "The main raison d'être of the education system is the attribution of qualifications which are necessarily discriminatory - otherwise they would loose all meaning in the economic environment on which the system depends. For this precise reason its efforts are as desperate as the work of Sisyphus, since its final aim is to produce in-

equalities, without which the economic system would take upon itself the task of creating a hierarchy of abilities."

The cultural division between the school environment and the child's social and family environments forms the background of these discriminations, in relation to three separate dimensions:

a) the work dimension
b) the leisure dimension
c) the educational dimension.

a) The work dimension

A number of families appeared to be focused and organised around work as their own individual means of survival: "My father used to come home at 9 o'clock at night. He carted wood. He didn't earn much, so he supplemented his income by working at home: he made wicker chairs. It was always work, work, work".

Children were sometimes made to contribute: "I had to work hard at home every night. I couldn't do my homework and I would fall asleep at school." In their environment, the parents' work tended to take precedence over school work: "I spent more time in the garden than at school because I was more interested in gardening work. Whenever I asked my parents if I could stay at home, they would say: "Well, all right then, as long as it is only one day."

b) The leisure dimension

In order to counterbalance the fact that daily life centers around basic survival necessities, existing spare time was geared to energy recuperation through collective leisure activities: "When my parents had nothing to do, they would sit in an armchair, or they would go to the bazaar or to the funfair, and once to the café."

Children's leisure activities followed the same pattern: "We used to have fun as children. I remember we used to spend time in the shed with our friends, listening to the radio... We would amuse ourselves with very simple things."

c) The educational dimension

The manual work which took place within these family units required few or no writing skills: "My father was a labourer, he didn't really need to write anything on paper, nor did my mother."

Reading for pleasure was not encouraged: "My parents weren't good at reading and writing. They didn't read books". School activities were not encouraged either: "School did not interest me. I felt it was all pointless and I preferred to work."

Intellectual activities had no clear meaning for these

children: reading remained a tedious task. It is only through gradual contact with the social and working environment that they became aware of the need and usefulness of being able to read and write: "I never realised the need to be able to read and write until I was 14. At that time I had a newspaper job and I couldn't even read the street names."

As a result of the existing cultural gap between the education establishment and these families, the latter never intervened in order to ensure better schooling for their children: "I don't think they had any contact with the school. They were rather slow in these matters. They tended to think: 'It'll be O.K., he'll manage.'"

These attitudes led children to deploy strategies designed to avoid having to write and to become withdrawn and aggressive in their behaviour. Without the support of the school or their families and faced with reading tasks which they found difficult, children tried to avoid them by using deliberate ploys such as cheating, being noisy or not attending, etc. "When I wasn't interested, I didn't try to learn. I couldn't have cared less. So they would send me out". "Because I couldn't follow, I was cleaning the school".

These different reactions are not superficial defensive reactions. They are the consequence of an internal process, resulting in a blockage that either produced withdrawal, or was externalised in the form of aggression.

Because illiterates feel inferior to others, helpless, humiliated, they look for another identity. Once the situation becomes unbearable, it breaks down: "It is the school that makes us aggressive. Aggression is the only way of conquering the humiliation of not being able to read and write. You don't want to be aggressive, but there is no alternative because you feel so helpless."

With no access to knowledge, discriminated against by the educational establishment, children reject both through unacceptable means such as aggression or withdrawal because the accepted means (learning and obtaining qualifications) have become inaccessible. From then on, the gap has been created and the learning process is impossible. The only relationship that remains is one of conflict between a legitimate power and a power which is illegitimate and reprehensible.

The case histories presented below reflect the same problems, viewed chronologically. The first places greater emphasis on the cultural divisions between school and family.

"I was not a strong, healthy child and spent much time in

sanatoriums, and open air health cures. Every time, I would have to change schools. Because of my illnesses and these changes of school, I developed learning difficulties. At school, the dunces were placed in front and good pupils at the back. What I did learn I learnt well, but I spent too much time away from school. I was also absent from school because I had to work. At that time, my mother received a pension of 500 F, but the rent was 800 F. So I would go along railway lines, disused mines collecting copper and railway bolts and selling them as scrap metal. This gave us enough money for food and covered the rent. We always had to manage. At the age of 7, I already worked, taking milk to the coal miners. At Christmas or New Year, while everyone was eating cake around the Christmas tree, I was knocking on doors wishing people a Happy New Year and receiving 5 or 10 francs which would buy me the pair of trousers my mother could not afford.

At home, I was always considered the little sick child or the little dunce. I was rejected by others, even by my cousins, because I was a dunce. I found it easier to climb trees and shake the apples down than to learn to read. In the end you are discouraged in many ways by others: they think you're telling lies or that you are wicked.

If I played truant when I wasn't working, and went out pilfering, I was in for it: I would get beaten on my back with a poker.

In the sixth year of primary school, I had a teacher who was very strict and very understanding. He said that it was better to be a good labourer than a bad lawyer. Because I didn't learn, I was given a spade and I started doing the gardening for the whole school, taking out the stones, planting potatoes.

When I went to Brussels, the teacher there threw a cigarette in my face, so I spat in his face. They sent me outside the school. They also stopped me from going on a school trip. That's how I I gave up going to school altogether. It was still primary school."

The second case history centers mainly around discrimination at school:

"I did the first and second year, but the results were the same. I never learned anything. Our teacher was a young woman who slept all the time and read the newspaper. I was nicknamed the 'spaghetti'... I was always in a corner, never doing anything and I was always last in my class. There were twenty pupils and for reading, she always began

with the same one. Each time it was my turn, it was time for break. So I never learned a thing. She never came to say: 'you should do it like this or like that.' I couldn't even write my name, let alone anything else. All my friends were scruffily dressed; they were workers' children. They couldn't read either.
This is because there was favouritism in the classroom. Because our teacher was a lady, all the children who were well dressed were placed at the front of the classroom, all the scruffy ones at the back. Also because I was one of the first Italian boys in her class, I was the spaghetti. So I had to empty the dustbin, fetch her newspaper and do other tasks of that nature. At the beginning, I could not understand why she taught me nothing, but eventually you get used to it, it becomes automatic and you don't even notice. We would play marbles and have a good laugh."

3.3. Poor school attendance and educational failure

On the one hand, the number of children attending school has been constantly rising and this is due not only to educational measures, the most important being the 1914 Compulsory Education Act, but also to economic, social and ideological factors. On the other hand, schools continue to play a role of discrimination, selection and exclusion which can be measured by the educational failure rate. We shall limit our following analysis to nursery and primary education (including remedial education) as they are primarily concerned with basic learning skills.

3.3.1. Nursery education

Nursery school attendance is not compulsory in Belgium. While an increasing number of children do attend nursery school (from 66.8% of children between the ages of 2 and 5 in 1961 to 80% in 1987), the frequency and regularity of attendance decreases according to the families' position in the social hierarchy. Turkish and North African children, and to a lesser extent Belgian children whose father (or mother) is an unskilled worker, and the children of immigrants from a European country, attend nursery school less frequently and on a less regular basis.

Within the immigrant population, there is a proportional

relation between lack of nursery school attendance and the families' ability to master the host language. There is therefore already an educational division from a very young age and which will have a bearing on the rest of the child's school education. Nursery education is increasingly viewed as a preparatory stage for primary education. Nursery school education is constantly being infiltrated with policies geared to the reinforcement of behavioural conditioning from the child's earliest years, whether in a diffuse or explicit manner. This preparatory policy has tended to accentuate premature selection mechanisms and introduce the idea of educational failure as early as nursery school.

If one analyses the influence of nursery school education on the failure rate in the first year of primary school, it is clear that nursery school reduces the gap between privileged (Belgians and immigrants) and underprivileged social categories but does not make it disappear.

For immigrant children in particular (Turks and North Africans), learning the host language is one of the necessary - but not sufficient - conditions for success at primary school.

When the parents know little or nothing of the language, the contributory role of nursery school education is considerable, even though all children do not have the same amount of contact with it. As a result, 50 to 60% of these children never attain a sufficient knowledge of the language.

In addition to knowledge of the language, there are a number of other factors which determine the relationship of underpriviledged people to nursery school education:

- The ambivalent role attributed to school by families: it is not only seen as a place where children can be looked after, and possibly as a preparation for primary school, but also as a threat to family values. There is also a fear of 'stigmatisation';
- The divergence of opinions on early childhood: priority is given to the social group of which the child is a member and where he plays no significant role, rather than to encouraging individual development. In certain Belgian families, hopes of social improvement are focused on the children, but without any real possibility of achieving it;
- Attitudes to language itself, which implicitly contains the breadth and richness of the experiences which determine its acquisition; the position and the role of children inside the family circle; the attitudes towards the outside world that are encouraged by the family (instrumental or discursive), etc.
- The difference between the behavioural norms and values

operating at school and those operating at home: discipline vs freedom of development; work vs play, etc.

According to a survey conducted in 1986 by the Department of Experimental Education of the University of Liège, parents from modest backgrounds tend to place more emphasis on the educational importance of reading skills and see it as an essential condition for success in later education. They tend to view nursery school education as being primarily responsible for developing cognitive skills in children in preparation for primary school. They themselves read much less than parents from more privileged backgrounds. Generally, these parents feel ill at ease and insecure with regard to the educational world (teachers know better what is good for the child). According to the authors, this attitude sometimes leads to the feeling that teachers are not taking enough interest. "For some parents, the school must do its utmost."

Nursery school plays an ambivalent role in the education of children from underprivileged backgrounds. Either it increases their chances of success, or for some children, it introduces an element of stigmatisation and an early selection process. Although they may have attended nursery school equally, all children do not start primary school on an equal footing.

3.3.2. Primary Education

There are as yet no clear indicators of the level of knowledge acquisition in primary school years. Statistics of children who are behind at school only provide an incomplete and imprecise picture of learning difficulties.

> "In the year 1983-84, 22.63% of children in the sixth year of primary school in the Walloon region were one year behind. For the same year, 9.37% of teenagers of the age of 13 and above were still in primary school and therefore were two years behind. In Flanders, lack of progress is less serious: 12.7% of children are one year behind and 1.5% are two or more years behind".[19]

These figures show a high rate of failure at primary school level (a third of children in the Walloon region and a seventh in Flanders),[20] although the failure rate has decreased steadily in the last few years. In the French speaking system, for example, 44.70% of children in primary 6th form were behind in the school year 1960-61, 32.86% in the year 1982-83.[21] More importantly, failure occurs during the first two years of primary school and 17% of children in the second year of primary school are already at least one year behind,[22] although these first two years are

mainly spent learning to read.

Failure at school does not occur haphazardly. It is closely linked to the occupation of the head of the household, which indicates the social and cultural background and origins. Statistics for the French community in the year 1983-84 are shown in Table 3.5.[23]

Profession of head of household	Total	1st yr	2nd yr	3rd yr	4th yr	5th yr	6th yr
Sen. managers (public)	2,7	3.14	4.76	3.02	1.31	4.19	2.24
Sen. managers (priv.)	3.18	4.35	3.16	3.19	3.04	3.91	1.44
Legal prof.	2.11	3.57	2.99	0.62	3.68	0.74	0.85
Medical prof.	1.78	2.93	0.77	2.23	1.46	2.22	1.01
Teachers	2.91	4.61	2.30	2.91	2.15	3.98	1.52
Middle managers	4.31	6.08	3.99	3.75	4.09	5.17	2.76
Junior managers	5.76	8.85	5.67	5.55	4.96	6.58	2.67
Farmers, fishermen	5.96	9.22	7.10	7.26	5.01	4.90	2.93
Skilled workers	9.43	15.44	10.00	9.28	7.62	9.27	4.06
Unskilled workers	12.46	21.68	12.22	12.60	9.50	11.08	4.84
Retailers, tradesmen	7.66	12.32	8.40	7.83	6.14	7.57	4.00
Artistic prof.	4.48	8.41	3.52	3.96	2.58	6.76	1.02
Unemployed or not defined	7.62	8.02	8.04	8.88	7.82	8.32	3.85
TOTALS	7.60	11.13	7.80	7.82	6.49	7.74	3.41

Table 3.5. Percentage and distribution of children repeating a year according to year of study and cocupation of head of household

"It shows that the children of unskilled workers have the highest failure rate at the end of the first primary school year: 21.68% or twice the average of all social categories (11.13%) and seven times higher than the lowest rate for children of parents in the medical profession (2.93%). Where the Flemish community is concerned, a survey was conducted in 1986 on 4,326 school children by the C.S.P.O. (see Table 3.6).[24] Although the layout of the results obtained is different from that used by the Ministry of Francophone Education, it clearly indicates that the majority of children who repeat a year belong to the lowest social and professional category (unskilled worker)."[25]

Poor school results not only (partially) reflect learning difficulties but they also represent an obstacle for the continuation of education at secondary level. "In the present social and economic context, primary school education can no longer be considered as the completion of an education process. It has no meaning in the economic world; it only precedes and leads to secondary education". After primary school, the sections of secondary general education which offer vocational openings and vocational training itself receive 80% of children who are behind at school (see graph 3.1.).

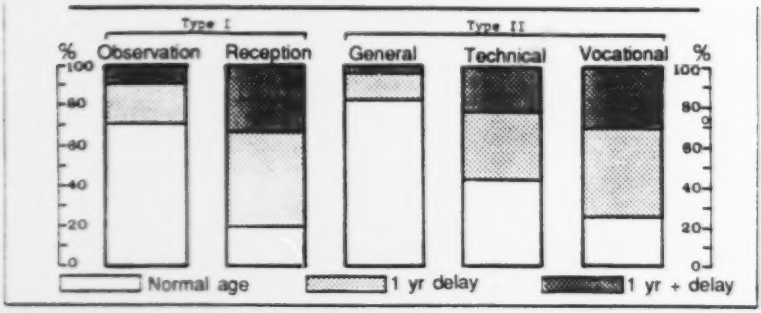
Socio-prof. category	1st yr	2nd yr	3rd yr	4th yr	5th yr	6th yr
Liberal prof. or sen. managers	-	1.5	7.5	4.7	2.7	10.5
Self-employed	15.8	13.4	25.0	16.3	17.8	9.2
Skilled workers	26.3	26.9	12.5	25.6	31.5	27.6
Unskilled workers	41.4	35.8	37.5	39.5	38.4	30.3
Unknown	10.6	14.9	12.5	13.9	2.8	13.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 3.6 Percentage and distribution of children repeating a year according to year of study and occupation of head of household, Flanders 1976

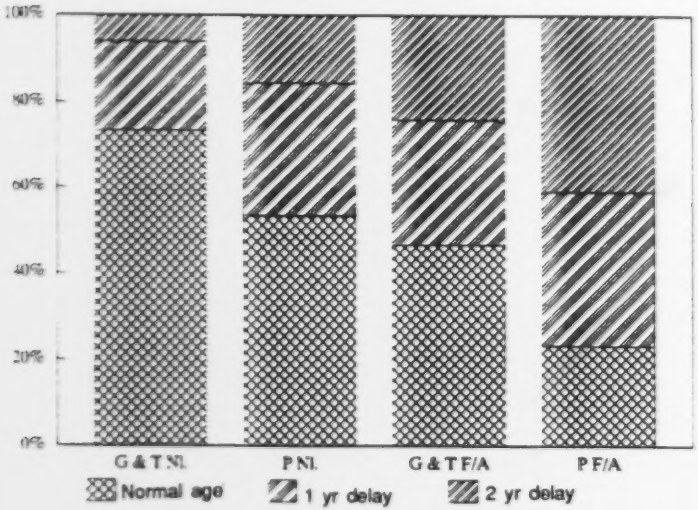
In Flanders, because school failure rates are lower, the phenomenon is less clearly marked. The trend, however, is the same: 47% of children in vocational training are behind in their education, compared to only 27% in general and technical education together (see graph 3.2.).

Evidently, these figures must be considered jointly with those relating to social background. It is mainly young people from underpriviliged backgrounds who fail most systematically and who therefore opt for the vocational educational channels.

Graph 3.1. Backwardness in secondary education



Graph 3.2. Backwardness in the third year of secondary school



G: General; T: Technical; P: Vocational
NI: Dutch language; F/A: French/German language

In summary, education plays a part in reinforcing the existing social hierarchy, sometimes as early as nursery school. In order to qualify this statement, a number of factors relating specifically to the interaction of children with the school environment must be mentioned.

- dysfunctional interaction: children whose cultural background is the most distant in nature to the school cultural model have difficulty in understanding the logic of the teacher, the meaning of their school work and the norms which operate in the school environment, etc.;
- the undervaluing of lower-class children and parents in the educational hierarchy and stratification process;
- the internalisation by these children of the critical comments of teachers and the development of a sense of inferiority and helplessness towards difficult learning tasks;
- the process of 'deculturalisation' caused by an exposure to a 'Culture' that rejects the children's own working-class culture;
- the overshadowing of their social knowledge and experience because the skills of these working-class children are not recognised.

3.3.3. Remedial education

A number of children who fail at school are redirected towards remedial education. In the country as a whole, 3.7% of primary school children were in remedial schools in the school year 1987-88.[30]

> "One would expect children who are judged unable to follow normal education and who attend schools where they have a greater ratio of teachers per child, to develop greater learning abilities. One would also expect that after spending some time in remedial education, they should be considered able to reintegrate into the normal education system. In reality, however, most of these children remain in remedial education and only eventually leave it for vocational training or sheltered industry."[31]
>
> "Children from underprivileged social and professional categories make up the great majority of pupils in remedial education (7% of pupils in nursery, primary and secondary education)."[32]

It is therefore the same children who are likely to fall behind at school and be placed in remedial schools. One can well ask oneself what role remedial education has to play; does it give children a second chance? Does it play a real remedial role or

does it lead nowhere? Unfortunately the scarcity of literature in the field of remedial education means that these questions, for the moment, must remain unanswered.

3.3.4. Conclusion: the link between failure at school, lack of school attendance and educational discrimination

In this section, we have provided a certain amount of statistical data relating to failure at school, the level of nursery and primary education and remedial education. Obviously, there is also a social selection process in secondary and higher education, as is seen, for example, in the fact that certain social classes are over-represented in technical and vocational education, that social background determines the various paths taken during educational life and that the children of working-class backgrounds are under-represented in higher education. In secondary education, poor performance takes such forms as leaving school prematurely, very poor progress, absenteeism, being fed up with school etc. Many working class children have negative feelings towards education.

There are many different schools of thought concerning the concrete phenomena which lead to social inequality and rejection at school. Some researchers have studied specific interactions between pupils and teachers and pointed out the deleterious effect of early labelling and stigmatisation by the teachers of certain categories of pupils, and the self-fulfilling prophecies which result. Pupils who are labelled as such in the school environment will clearly see themselves as inferior and as failures. Other researchers have emphasised the cultural conflict present in the school environment, between the dominant culture of elites reflected in the curricula and the different values and norms of conduct, and the culture of various underprivileged social groups, some of which are faced with an enormous cultural gap between the school and the family environment. The work of Willis and his successors on the 'education counter-culture' of certain sections of working-class youth is well known. Indeed some of these social groups reject education and therefore also reject the idea that it can improve their situation. Working-class parents do not attach as much importance to education as higher social classes, and their children have different values and norms from those which are taught at school. Research on absenteeism, children who leave school early, and children who are fed up with school has highlighted the importance of this negative attitude towards education.

This suggests that it is not the school system as such

which is responsible for educational failure and illiteracy. The problem of illiteracy and its educational causes must be placed in the larger context of the lack of equal opportunity and social rejection. Although they relate to poor school performance, the available data indicate that poor education and illiteracy are social problems which are not isolated but are part of a more general process of social rejection and marginalisation.[33] Failure at school, which can lead to illiteracy, is therefore caused by a general process of social rejection which also implies a lack of participation or marginalisation in the areas of work, income, housing, health, etc. Illiterates are not evenly distributed among the different social classes; they tend to belong to those sections of the population who, at a variety of different levels, are disadvantaged and who are confronted with serious social problems. Illiteracy results from the complex interaction between different social rejection and marginalisation processes, which are in turn reinforced by it.

3.4. Learning to read: adapting teaching methods to society

Poor performance at the start of primary school reflects the difficulties experienced by children in learning to read. For several decades, official statistics have shown that almost half the pupils in the first year of primary school have great difficulty in learning to read and that a large number of them will never completely overcome it.[34]

It has been noted that, at the start of primary school, some children learn to read 'naturally' whatever the teaching method used. These are children who have already acquired, usually in the home environment, the conviction that written text is the bearer of an interesting message. However,

> "If one observes children with prolonged educational problems, children in adaptation, verbal re-education, or remedial classes, it is clear that a large percentage do not see the advantages of reading, for information, for pleasure or to enrich one's experience. For those children, reading seems to have no value in itself; it is simply a 'school activity'."[35]

3.4.1. Learning to read at school

TEACHING METHODS

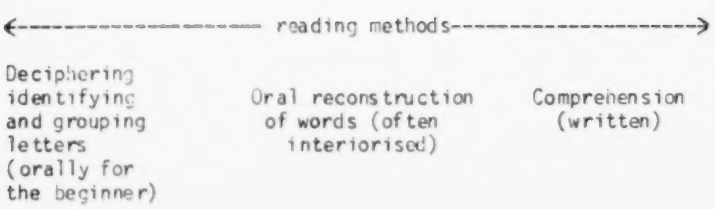
One of the first causes of reading problems is the teaching method used by the majority of teachers.

> "Traditionally, there are two main approaches to methods employed by schools to teach children to read: on the one hand, the synthetic approach includes the alphabetic, syllabic, phonetic and gestural methods (the latter is in fact a syllabic method with kinesthetic support), and on the other hand the analytical approach involves a global and natural method. The distinction between these methods is based on the teacher's choice of reading matter: in the global method, the teacher's choice is based on the subject matter while in the natural method, the teaching of reading is based on the transcription of pupils' oral expositions. There are in addition a number of mixed methods which either integrate or blend the two broad approaches."[36]

In synthetic methods, the combinative nature of the written and oral forms and the correspondence between them is taught from the beginning. According to L. Detiège,[37] while methods that follow the other approach may lead to a delay in the acquisition of both oral and written skills, most of them are aimed at oral deciphering and use written material which is appropriate and is to a greater or lesser extent adapted to the information content. Where the latter is concerned, there is no fundamental difference of approach between analytical (global and natural) methods and other methods.

If the reading material that is given to children is not subjected to such a rigorous methodology and is therefore more easily understood by the child, its content becomes useless in educational terms. Reading the same text over and over again with a complete knowledge of its content (perhaps because one has participated in its drafting) cannot be considered as a genuine reading task.

The complementary nature of the synthetic and analytical approaches is shown in the model overleaf[38]:


reading methods
Deciphering identifying and grouping letters (orally for the beginner)
Oral reconstruction of words (often interiorised)
Comprehension (written)

According to the survey conducted by the University of Liège, the methods used in primary education have mostly been based, at least in part, on traditional deciphering techniques (see Table 3.7 below).[39]

Gestural	28 %
Syllabic or synthetic	8 %
Global	10 %
Mixed	32 %
Combination of several methods	19 %
Others	3 %

Table 3.7. Reading methods used in primary education

Or, as J. Foucambert remarks,

> "Succeeding in an operation which for a child involves picking out in a word the groups of letters which correspond to phonemes, making a connection between the sequence of sounds heard in this way with the familiar oral form of the word among all the others which resemble it, and having done all this, managing to remember the previous words which have also been learned according to this method, requires a large amount of training and an astonishing amount of perspicacity."[40]
>
> "This threefold perceptive, linguistic and mental feat that is required of children and which has nothing to do with reading is without doubt the principal cause of the difficulties experienced by children in the first year of primary school. The problem is that if teachers spend much of their time and energy making children understand and memorise correspondence tables, there is practically no room left for the transition from deciphering to reading."[41]

Whether tacitly or explicitly, teachers tend to believe that once the deciphering process has been set in motion, it will then be spontaneously applied by the child to all types of written material. It therefore becomes unnecessary for them to ask themselves whether the child is capable of choosing his own reading material and if not, how he can be taught to do so; what selection of books does the school have to offer? Does it give children a choice? Does it allow children to learn the different functions of reading?

The problem of learning difficulties in children has not led to a change in methods or reading resources. Instead, structured techniques have been introduced to reinforce learning, but these techniques still focus on deciphering, not access to meaning.

The data provided by the survey mentioned above gives us an indication of children's attitudes towards reading. Sixteen per cent of children in their last year of primary school say that they cannot read or can only read certain types of text.[43] More than one in ten children in the same year, are not aware of the advantages of being able to read either now or in the future, and more than one in three children are motivated by a factor which has little to do with reading for its own sake, such as good school results and/or social improvement. This leaves less than half the children who say that they regard reading as intrinsically worthwhile for information or communication purposes, or for pleasure).[44] Furthermore, 17% of children in their first year of primary school fail to establish a connection between school activities and learning to read and write. These children still do not regard school as a place where they will be taught to read and write in spite of the fact that, for at least a year, the majority of daily school activities have been related to it.[45]

The authors of this study agree with G. & E. Chaveau[46] that "at the beginning of primary school, only a small percentage of children had a sufficient awareness of the written form for them to benefit from the methods used in the teaching of reading." G. & E. Chaveau also point out the differences which exist between children according to their social and cultural background, and the great diversity of acquired vocabulary within a single socio-economic group. In their view, "this diversity is linked for the most part to the diversity of family cultural norms."[47]
Children with these learning difficulties will become non-readers in adulthood and will be totally unable to cope with authentic written material. They will be unable to develop their own reading plans or to vary their approach according to the nature and the presentation of the text they are dealing with.

THE GROUP - TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

Another factor that must be taken into account when analysing childrens' reading difficulties concerns the relationship between the teacher and the class as a whole. "Reading skills are generally taught to a whole class of children and the same things are simultaneously taught to all the pupils of that class."[48]

This type of group teaching does not make allowances for differences which exist among children in terms of interest, knowledge, the difficulties they experience, etc. Once a child falls behind the rest of the class, the problem is likely to remain for a long time. If he repeats a year, he will have to start again from scratch and will be faced with the same teaching methods, often the same reading material and is very likely to experience the same difficulties as a consequence, if he has not already lost all motivation.

THE TEACHER'S EXPECTATIONS

A third and final factor we must mention - we shall not mention any others although we are not sure that the question will have been fully explored - is the way in which the child perceives the teacher's expectations.

> "Rosenthal et al. have shown that teachers' expectations play a decisive role in childrens' future academic success. In other words, children are very quick to notice whether the teacher has faith in their individual abilities. Positive expectations generally produce good results and vice versa."[49]

There are of course in practice a number of other methods of dealing with this question, but these are still very isolated and restricted to an individual teacher or school. We deemed it essential, however, to highlight the most common teaching methods because they have some part to play in tomorrow's adult illiteracy.

3.4.2. Reading ability: a social problem

The education system is not solely responsible. Reading is a social act, it concerns social relationships and these are present in the school environment. According to J. Foucambert:

> "It is not surprising that in a social system that is based on the fact that 70% of people leave their brain in the cloakroom, only 30% of the population should be readers.

> In other words, there is no mystery in the low percentage of readers in industrialised countries, it is linked to social status, class relations and what is expected of people.(...) The industrialised system has in the last century developed according to an economic model based on a 'Taylorist' conception of the organisation of labour. Taylorism states that a good worker is a worker who leaves his brain in the cloakroom, someone who is asked to perform, not to conceptualise. And in order to prevent workers from conceptualising, work is fragmented. It is therefore not surprising that, on leaving the work place, these people forget to collect their brain and use it when they consume. But then society does not want the consumer to conceptualise and theorise either. A good consumer is also a consumer who leaves his brain behind, so is a good voter, if the level of some electoral campaigns is anything to go by."[50]

According to the same author, the school system is also a replica of the Taylor model.

> "Children are also asked to leave their brain in the cloakroom. I often quote this typical joke about a young kid who has just started his first year of primary school. That evening, when he arrives home, his father, O.S., asks him: "Well, was work O.K?" and the kid replies: "Yeah, it was O.K., but it isn't finished, I've got to go back tomorrow." Quite typically, the educational programme is completely alien to children. They do not understand what reading is all about, or how they are to learn to write. They are required to perform well in learning tasks, but not to have any control over them. Looking at the school system, it is clear that it functions according to the Taylor model whereby the only children who can learn at school are those who are already in a position of power over their surroundings outside school. The school system is therefore segregational."[51]

3.5. The problem of illiteracy

3.5.1. From personal failure to a social problem

In spite of compulsory education and the huge increase in school attendance, large sections of the population of Belgium and of other Western European countries and the industrialised world as a whole, seem to experience serious difficulties in learning to

read and write. This is due to the complex factors underlying poor performance at school and educational exclusion, which are themselves part of a much broader marginalisation phenomenon.

Defining illiteracy is not a simple task. The following description, based on UNESCO's definition of functional illiteracy, is given by 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen':

> "Illiterate people are people who feel trapped and restricted in the way they interact with the rest of society because they feel that they are unable - or almost unable - to read and write."[52]

The important point in this description of illiteracy, is that the ability to read and write is no longer considered simply as a skill to be acquired, but is considered in the light of its functional dimension, i.e. the role it plays in social integration and participation, and on the other hand, that past personal experience is taken into account.

Illiterate or near-illiterate people face a large number of problems, which seriously hinder their possibility of social integration. In the work place, illiterate people often find themselves in unskilled and poorly valued jobs. Jobs where reading and writing skills are not prerequisites are becoming rare. As a result, illiterates are almost totally excluded from possibilities of promotion or changing jobs. Their participation in recreational and cultural activities, as well as any political activities is seriously obstructed. In today's society, communication is largely based on the ability to read and write. As a result, the illiterate individual pays a huge price in terms of isolation, social exclusion, dependence and a sense of inferiority. Illiterate people are plunged into what Paulo Freire called 'the silence culture'.

The taboo atmosphere surrounding illiteracy meant that it was first considered as a personal failure, a defect or a handicap which was the result of personality problems. All the testimonies of illiterate people speak clearly of a sense of shame, of the surprisingly inventive and often successful nature of their efforts to hide their 'defect' from the outside world. The need for such dissimulation, avoidance and survival tactics and the fear of discovery, places an enormous amount of pressure on the daily life of illiterates.

Only recently has illiteracy been generally recognised as a social problem rather than the result of personal failure.

3.5.2. The public recognition of illiteracy

In Belgium, the problem of illiteracy was first acknowledged by

the existing literacy organisations, not by the authorities. It is in social and cultural work, in the fight against poverty and in the various community work initiatives that field workers first came up against the problem of modern illiteracy. These same field workers brought the problem to public attention in the 80's.

As we shall see in chapters 5 and 6, literacy organisations in Flanders, Brussels or the Walloon region, relied greatly on the media to make the public aware of the problem (particularly from 1982 onwards, following International Literacy Day on 8th September) and to recruit participants and voluntary staff. As in other countries, the question of illiteracy became, through the media, a public preoccupation which had strong repercussions on the problem itself; it contributed to a greater public awareness of illiteracy and a more positive attitude towards it. Illiteracy was no longer a taboo subject and had become publicly recognised. The media succeeded in stimulating a search for consensus on the problem and a recognition of the necessity to find effective solutions. As is still the case today, there was not only a consensus among political representatives of different sympathies, but in the public at large. The public interest aroused by the media also had a great impact on mobilisation and recruitment. On the one hand, illiterate people themselves, who could see that what was previously considered to be a purely personal problem had become publicly recognised, were able to reveal the fact without a sense of guilt, and to attempt to find a solution; on the other hand, voluntary workers were being rallied to contribute to a new burning social question.

However, the interest taken by the media in the literacy process, and their tendency to dramatise the issue, has its own risks: it can mean that voluntary workers are motivated too much by a sense of charity; the problem of illiteracy may be grossly exaggerated and the guilt feeling of illiterates reinforced by the fact that illiteracy has finally been publicly acknowledged and that certain forms of illiteracy or semi-illiteracy which did not previously present serious problems, are now considered as serious.

Secondly, the growing public interest in illiteracy was also due to a specific political climate in the social sector. The late 70's and the early 80's saw an increase in awareness and interest in the problems of schooling and poor school performance in general, with the appearance of a number of other initiatives, similar to the literacy movement such as the 'Enseignement de la deuxième chance' (1980), the 'Opnieuw Gaan Leren'(1979) and the 'Omschakelen' (1979),etc. These initiatives and others led to changes of attitude in various sectors, such as the criticism of

institutionalised education; the development of alternative educational ideas and methods; the radical criticism of the institutional nature of social services; new ideas on equal opportunity, on awareness and emancipation. Finally, there were similar changes in the socio-cultural sector, such as political education and the radicalisation of ideas on continuing education. In other words there was, in many areas, a proliferation of new radical ideas which led to an increasing interest in the sections of the population which were considered as the 'victims' of an essentially unjust social system, and in the various projects of emancipation and awareness which might help to fight it. The attention given to the problem of schooling in general and illiteracy in particular is the result of the climate of change in all these different sectors. The first local literacy projects to be created were connected with organisations and institutions with such radical leanings.

Due to growing public awareness and interest in the question of illiteracy, brought about by the media and various other strong influences, the problem finally became a political issue in the 80's. During that decade, illiteracy and schooling were several times considered as political priorities in education, adult education, social and cultural services, but these political statements have so far not materialised in practice.

The social context in which the problems of schooling and illiteracy became political issues, albeit more in words than in deeds, must not be overlooked. It took place at a time when there was mass unemployment and when the shortfalls of the education system in terms of vocational training were under criticism. Government concern over education focused at the time on the fact that education was not adequately geared to the employment market, on premature school leaving, on anti-educational attitudes and on negative attitudes towards school among certain categories of young people. There is hardly any doubt that political interest in basic education and in the fight against illiteracy has been implicitly, if not explicitly inspired by economic and employment motives. The provision of better training (and/or retraining) for the under-educated sections of the population and a (not too costly) solution to the problem of educational marginalisation could have beneficial effects on unemployment and the reintegration of problem categories into the labour market.

NOTES

1. Lire et Ecrire. 1984. *Pour une campagne d'alphabétisation dans la Communauté* française de Belgique. Brussels: 6-8.

2. Theoretically, children should not be included in this figure.

3. Sources: "Résolution sur la lutte contre l'analphabétisme - Exposé des motifs." *Journal Officiel* des Communautés européennes, 14 June 1982 No. C 149/86;
Lorensetto, A. 1980. "Rapport sur les problèmes d'alphabétisation dans une Communauté élargie." Berlin: CEC-CEDEFOP Seminar, 14-17 October 1980;
Unesco Annual Report 1981.

4. The only data contained in census information concerns the obtaining of diplomas or certificates.

5. See: ALBSU. 1987. *Literacy, Numeracy and Adults.* London: ALBSU;
Groupe Permanent de Lutte contre l'Illettrisme et Infométrie. 1988. *Etude quantitative sur l'illettrisme.* Paris: Direction de l'Action Sociale du Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Solidarité, Conseil de Communication;
Creative Group. 1987. *Literacy in Canada. A Research Report.* Ottawa: Southam News.
According to these surveys, functional illiteracy varies from 9% to 24% according to the criteria used to define the illiteracy threshold. Because the socio-economic situation is similar, it is highly probable that these figures are applicable to Belgium. See also: Kenis, D. 1987. "Zijn de behoeften aan basiseducatie wel gekend?" *Vorming Vlaanderen* 3 (1): 39-57.

6. Goffinet, S., Loontjens, A., Loebenstein, A., Kestelyn, C. 1986. *Les itinéraires d'analphabétisme.* Research for the Commission of the European Communities. Brussels/Luxembourg: Lire et Ecrire/EC Official Publications Office.

7. We are fully aware that the sample used may not be representative, since it is uncertain whether illiterate people attending literacy courses are representative of the illiterate population as a whole. It is in fact unlikely. We are tempted to assume that the people most likely to feel the need to become literate are those who are the most socially integrated: they find it easier to make that decision, while the social and psychological barrier increases with the amount of social

oppression. Educational problems may therefore be underestimated in this survey.

8. Unfortunately, these figures do not apply only to Belgium, but to the whole sample (3-variable cross-checks were not carried out on the sample). They are, however, quite close to the Belgian situation because the sample was composed of 41% of Belgian people, and because Belgium is near average in this respect.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Van Haecht, A. 1985. *L'enseignement rénové. De l'origine à l'éclipse*. Brussels: Institut de Sociologie, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles: 265.

12. Goffinet, S. et al. 1986 (see Note 6), appendix 7. The events took place in the late '50s to early '60s.

13. And more recently, in secondary education, the 1983 law on the raising of the school leaving age to 18. See paragraph 4.3.3.

14. National Statistics Institute. These figures are underestimates because, theoretically, children between 2 and 2½ years should have been excluded, but this was not possible.

15. Bastenier, A., Dasseto, F., Scheuer, B. 1985. "Mômes d'immigrés en maternelle." Louvain-la-Neuve: Groupe d'Etudes des Migrations et des Relations Interethniques/UCL & CIO. These figures are the result of a survey carried out in 1983-84 among the teachers of a representative sample of primary school pupils in the French Community. Although, as far as we know, no similar survey has been carried out in Flanders, we assume that the results would be similar.

16. For example, during an end of year tea party in 3rd year nursery school to which parents were invited, one of the mothers said: "Audrey might be slightly dyslexic, but we should know more clearly later. If she can't write her name in proper writing by Christmas, she's got problems." *Echec à l'échec*, periodical of the "Confédération Générale des Ensignants." Vol. 58, 1988, p. 3.

17. Delhaxhe, A. and Massoz, D. 1989. *La place de la lecture dans la vie des jeunes enfants*. Brussels: Direction générale des Etudes du

Ministère de l'Education nationale. This 1986 survey included all State schools in the French Community.

18. Idem: 33-73

19. King Baudouin Foundation. 1987. "Instruire et former pour lutter contre la pauvreté." *Pauvreté et précarité* No. 4 (Brussels).

20. The reason for this difference is not known.

21. Etudes et documents de la Direction Générale des Etudes, Services statistiques et Programmation. 1985. *Evolution des effectifs* Vol. 8, p. 6. The post- 1983 figures, which show another decrease in failure rates (30.8% in 1983-84), have not been included because of the possible bias effect of the 1983 law which makes it impossible for a child over the age of 13 to remain in primary school.

22. Etudes et documents. 1985 (see Note 21), pp. 6 and 8.

23. Etudes et documents. 1984. *Enseignements maternel et primaire ordinaires* Vol. 2, p. 3.

24. Centrum voor Sociaal en Psycho-Pedagogisch Onderzoek, Heverlee. See: Verbrugghe, B. and Du Laing, L. et al. 1977. "De democratisering van het onderwijs, het nuchtere ontwaken uit een al te mooie wensdroom." *De Gids op Maatschappelijk Gebied* 68 (6-7): 491-514, quoted in Wielemans, W. 1984. *Opvoeding en onderwijs onder maatschappelijke druk*. Leuven: Acco: 267.

25. King Baudouin Foundation. 1987 (see Note 19): 19.

26. Idem: 20.

27. Etudes et documents. 1985 (see Note 21): 19.

28. Composed on the basis of a table in: King Baudouin Foundation. 1987. (see Note 19): 19

29. King Baudouin Foundaton. 1988. *Enfance et exclusion*. Brussels, pp. 45-48.

30. National Statistics Institute.

31. Blondin, C., De Landsheere, V., Detheux, M., Dethier, A., Lejong, M. and Massoz, D. 1985. *Des chercheurs vont à l'école.* Liège: Université de Liège, Laboratoire de Pédagogie expérimentale.

32. King Baudouin Foundation. 1988. *Enfance et exclusion.* Brussels, p. 31.

33. See synthesis in: King Baudouin Foundation. 1987 (see Note 19); Baert, H. 1988. "Analfabeten en armoede: over anonimiteit en achterstelling." *Werf* 6 (34): 6-11;
Verdurmen, H. 1989. "Laaffescholde volwassenen en deelname aan onderwijs en vorming." In: *Gids Sociaal-Cultureel Werk.* A.IV.1.d. afl. 24.

34. Detiège, L. 1989. "La pédagogie de la lecture". *Lire* 9: 26.

35. Lepot, C. and Polet, C. *La lecture intentionnelle à l'école.* Brussels: Ministry of Education and French Culture, Commission for the Renewal of Elementary Education, Publication No. 5, p. 6.

36. Detiège, L. 1989 (see Note 34): 23-24.

37. Idem: 25

38. Ibid.

39. Delhaxe, A. and Massoz, D. 1989 (see Note 17): 130.

40. Foucambert, J. 1976. *La manière d'être lecteur.* Brussels: O.C.D.L.-SERMAP.

41. Detiège, L. 1989 (see Note 34): 32.

42. Delhaxe, A. and Massoz, D. 1989 (see Note 17).

43. Idem: 188-191.

44. Idem: 201-210.

45. Idem: 193-196.

46. Chaveau, G. and E. 1985. "Les processus d'acquisition ou d'échec au cours préparatoire." *Revue Française de Pédagogie*: 8.

47. Idem: 9.

48. Janssens, A. and De Corte, E. 1989. "Pédagogie différenciée de la lecture dans les petites classes: bilan d'utilisation d'une malette pédagogique pour l'enseignement de la lecture en Flandre." *Lire* 9: 10.

49. Lisenborghs, J. 1989. "Pouvoir apprendre. Les attentes ou Pygmalion à l'école?" *Contradictions* 57: 162.

50. Foucambert, J. 1988. "La lecture n'est en crise que de croissance." Lecture given in Brussels, November 1988.

51. Ibid.

52. Adraensens, E. 1990. "De problematiek van het analfabetisme." In: Baert, H. and Ponjaert, I. (eds.) *Wij nemen de handschoen op! 1990 Internationaal Jaar van de strijd tegen het analfabetisme.* Dendermonde: Alfabetisering Vlaanderen and King Baudouin Foundation: 7.

53. Van Damme, D. 1987. "Contradicties van alfabetisering. Historische en vormingspolitieke bedenkingen bij een actueel 'problem'." *Comenius* 7 (25): 3-26, esp. pp. 6-7.

4. GOVERNMENT POLICIES

4.1. Introduction

Both the public and the political recognition of the problems of illiteracy, lack of schooling and poor learning performance in general, led the authorities to introduce a whole series of limited political measures concerning basic education, although they were not explicitly and specifically related to illiteracy. Before embarking on a description of the growth of the literacy movement itself, a brief mention of these measures is required. In order to fully understand the problem, we must examine the nature of the Belgian Welfare State and its recent developments.

4.2. An overview of the Welfare State and its evolution, and social policy in Belgium

As in other Western European countries, a number of official measures have been introduced by the State in matters of social policy. With the creation of a Welfare State in Belgium, the State now guarantees its citizens a certain level of economic prosperity and well-being and undertakes to provide an equitable solution to social problems. Compared to other countries in the world, Belgium is, relatively speaking, one of the countries which allocates a large proportion of its national product and public expenditure to the social sector.[1] For example, in all matters relating to income, health, housing, education, public welfare etc., the State guarantees, at a minimum level, certain fundamental social rights. As a result, all citizens have a right of access to public amenities and are able to resort to a number of specific courses of action in order to remedy a situation. A vast system of administrative measures and practices has been established for this purpose.

However, there is no need for these social measures and amenities to be under State administration. In Belgium, social institutions are greatly politicised. Many social measures are the result of a delegation of power by the State to organisations with a political bias and which receive financial support from the State, particularly in matters pertaining to education, health, social benefits, adult education, etc. Throughout the social sector, there is a complex mixture of public funds and private initiative. Unlike in the Netherlands, for example, pillarisation shows no signs of regressing in Belgium. This not only has an effect on the country's social policy, but was also

responsible for the great public sensitivity to the crisis undergone by the Welfare State in the 1980's.[2] The role of private intitiative in the social sector is considerable: the introduction of social measures to deal with new problems as they present themselves will not be the work of the State, but the result of State-financed private initiatives of different political leanings, which take control of these questions until they eventually come under State jurisdiction. Social initiatives which are deliberately non-political are often confronted with serious difficulties. In chapters 5 and 6, we shall clearly demonstrate how this phenomenon has had a negative effect on the fight against illiteracy.

Until the late 70's, there was in Belgium a strong political consensus about the creation of a Welfare State. In spite of having other social and political goals, the various social organisations and political parties were united in their wish to see the establishment of a Belgian State which would assume responsibility, financial and otherwise, in a number of areas such as income policy, benefits, education, health, social welfare and housing, etc. During the 60's and 70's, the distribution of wealth, social justice and equal opportunity were priority questions in many of the Welfare State's areas of activity. Many social policies and measures date back to those years and bear the mark of the social and political optimism of the times. However, a number of studies have shown that redistribution has not taken place in practice as much as one would have hoped. One of these studies, by H. Deleeck, has shown that it is the upper social strata which benefit the most from certain social measures and that vertical social inequalities remain unaffected by them[3]: it is the well known 'Mathew effect'.

During the late 70's and the 80's, Belgian social policy took on a Liberal Conservative leaning: Christian Democrat and Liberal coalition governments, in power from 1981 to 1987, once again cut spending and restricted social policy measures. As in most other Western European countries, political consensus on the Welfare State gradually crumbled, marking the begining of a regression. Liberal Conservatives criticised it for its unreasonable cost and the lack of control over expenditure in a time of economic and financial crisis. Even stronger criticism was made of the unjustified resort to social policies by certain social organisations and the harmful economic consequences of a number of social measures, such as the vocational motivation scheme and the reduction of individual responsibility. The role of the Welfare State had to be restricted, and market forces and the family re-established as the instruments for the perpetuation of class structure. Such ideas as the promotion of a basic

solidarity and slogans calling for privatisation and deregulation were widespread in political circles.

As a result, social policy during the 80's became more limited and selective. Although the cuts in social spending proved to be rather small in real terms, the set-back suffered by the Welfare State had a serious impact on the lives of many social groups, coinciding with the Welfare State's inability to provide solutions to a great number of social problems. For example, poverty (whether occasional or not) and marginalisation reached serious proportions towards the end of the 70's.[4] Certain social categories were facing many hardships which reinforced each other at different levels, and appeared unable to confront them or to make use of their social and political rights to cope with them. As we shall see, illiteracy is often a component of this type of problem accumulation.

From 1980 onwards, the decline of the Welfare State and the deterioration in the standard of living of underprivileged sections of the population led to a social policy which was based on tightening control rather than a desire to solve the problems effectively. There was - and still is today - not only a lack of finance to carry out fundamental social policy reforms, but also very often a lack of political will to tackle these problems at their roots. The last few years have seen the beginnings of a favourable change in this respect, with at least the expression of a renewed determination to fight poverty and social rejection. We shall see in further chapters that the Belgian literacy process has been strongly influenced (directly or indirectly) by the development of the Welfare State and by social policy.

4.3. Educational policy

4.3.1. The democratisation of education and other measures concerning educational discrimination

As in some other Western European countries, the world of education was being stirred up by ideas of democratisation and equal opportunity for working-class children. In their analysis of the development of this political educational movement from 1953 to 1975, Vandekerckhove and Huyse start from the idea that the democratisation of education covered a whole spectrum of objectives, such as the alleviation of material hardship for a certain category of students, the creation of a Belgian intellectual reserve to stimulate the Belgian economy, the development of latent abilities, the provision of better opportunities for personal fulfillment and finally, the reduction of social in-

equality in education.[5] The authors point out that the idea that education might provide a remedy for social inequality has not been given an important place in discussions on democratisation, due to political and ideological differences, and the 'pillarisation' of the education system. Furthermore, the conclusions arrived at in scientific and sociological research on the lack of equal opportunity in education, have never aroused much interest among politicians.[6]

Nevertheless, a number of cautious measures were introduced during that period, aimed at encouraging the participation of working-class children in the education process and at providing possible solutions in cases of very poor school performance. To this aim, educational policy mainly centred around access to secondary and higher education. It focused particularly on the elimination of all kinds of financial obstacle in the form of scholarship awards for gifted children without means, to enable them to pursue their studies, and the 1959 Educational Pact which made secondary education free and accessible to all. Educational policy was less interested in content reforms. These democratic reforms did in fact take place in 1971 and included a number of interesting objectives:

- the elimination of elitism, so that more young people from underpriviledged backgrounds should have the opportunity of reaching the upper echelons of education;
- the standardisation of secondary education, postponing the final choice of orientation to the ages of 15 and 16, thus providing everyone with the possibility of reorientation through different channels after an equal basic education;
- the use of active educational methods, centred around pupils' individual personality and aimed at stimulating their interest and abilities; the introduction of qualitative and continuous assessment and the adaptation of the possible courses of study to individual needs.

While the 1971 Act made reform possible, it retained the possibility of opting for the traditional form of education, except in State schools where the reforms became compulsory from the beginning of the 1978-79 school year. However, the percentage of schools opting for the new system gradually increased from 79% in 1979 to 93% in 1986-87.

Primary education was also at that time the subject of a series of reforms aimed at counteracting existing social inequalities and those resulting from the education system itself. The aim of adaptation classes, created in 1971, was to help children with a normal level of intellectual aptitude, but who were in danger of failing as a result of learning difficulties or accidental circumstances (illness, moving house, etc.) and to give

them a chance to catch up.

Another of these reforms is the experimental '5/8 course', mainly in French-speaking schools. This course was introduced in order to make the transition from nursery school to primary school less abrupt and to reduce the number of failures in the first few years of school. Its specific objectives were the following:

- to allow children to develop at their own pace;
- to introduce a certain amount of flexibility in learning so that the younger children may spontaneously develop, through the older children, a more elaborate behaviour pattern, and that the older children may reinforce their acquired knowledge through the need to explain to their younger peers;
- to stimulate meaningful interaction within a heterogeneous group as well as self-reliance within the group;
- to help children to carry out team projects and resolve common problems jointly;
- to enable children to use the knowledge acquired at school in a practical context.

A number of studies have shown that the results of this experiment were on the whole positive: fewer children were behind at the beginning of the third year; however, social inequalities had not been completely eradicated.

4.3.2. Budget restrictions and the return of a liberal educational policy.

Since 1980, there has been a return to a liberal conception of education under the Christian Democrat governments from 1981 to 1987, along with a 10% reduction of the educational budget, resulting in a reversal of the policies of the previous years. Adaptation classes were abolished. The 5/8 course never progressed beyond the experimental stage. In the year 1984-85, 4% of primary schools operated that system, but by the following year, there were only 2%, in spite of the fact that estimates showing the positive achievements of the experimental scheme had been published by the Ministry of Education.[7]

Under this policy, the education system has suffered a reversal which has completely altered it, with the return of the following methods: numerical marking, thus minimising qualitative assessment; examinations, to the detriment of continuous assessment; the gearing of History and French curricula to the transfer of knowledge, the limitation of opportunities for creativity and choice, etc. In Flanders, educational reform was effectively stopped by the introduction in 1989 of a standardised education

system containing Type 1 (innovative) elements and Type 2 elements (traditional secondary education).

In 1986, a Royal Decree aimed at budgetary restrictions, introduced a Social Advancement Rationalisation Programme[8] which jeopardised the future of certain sections of the population and a number of institutions. Another Royal Decree followed, guaranteeing the provision of enrolment fees for this particular type of education.

According to A. Van Haecht, "the obligation to reduce public expenditure in areas which are no longer the focus of interest and activity can only encourage a return to educational structures and practices which, while they are less costly, are definitely less justified (...). One can well ask oneself if the economic situation did not serve as a pretext for the supporters of an elitist education system who discovered and nurtured the idea of an 'egalitarianism crisis'.[9]

In addition to reducing the role of the Welfare State under the cover of budget restrictions, these governments also put an end to a more or less democratic education policy and thereby endangered in practice the measures which had been introduced to remedy poor school performance. It must be noted, however, that primary, remedial and vocational education were less affected by the budgetary restrictions, but on the whole, the concern of political leaders to provide underprivileged children with equal opportunity was greatly diminished.

4.3.3. The raising of the school leaving age

Contrary to expectations, the sudden change in educational policy in the 80's (which also happened in most other Western European countries), did not reduce interest in the problems of schooling. The focus shifted, slowly but surely, from the democratisation of education and equal opportunity towards the social and economic control of the problem of poor school performance.

One of the principal reforms in this respect was the Law of 29th June 1983 on compulsory education, raising the school leaving age from 14 to 18. Although it had already been on the horizon for some time, it must be placed in the context of mass unemployment among under-educated young people and of the rising concern for premature school leaving and lack of interest in learning. The idea behind the raising of the school leaving age was to keep these young people off the streets and away from the employment market, to provide them with better, more vocational training. The 1983 Law instituted a mixed form of education for young people of 16 years and over, alternating work and

education, with different variations such as vocational training for the middle classes, the industrial apprenticeship contract and, in part-time education, the creation of Part-time Education Centres ('Centres d'Enseignement à Horaire Réduit' or CEHR's).

The various forms of part-time education proved to be somewhat unsuccessful, particularly in terms of resulting employment. In order to revive the idea of linked training, the Flemish Ministry of Education, in collaboration with businesses, put together in 1985-86 a scheme of "compulsory linked training for part-time learners", which obtained the support of the European Social Fund. The scheme strengthened the role of enterprises in the following way: the business environment provided the training in exchange for which they received educational subsidies.

Via this scheme and others, there was a serious attempt by the authorities to fight youth unemployment, particularly among those categories suffering from a lack of basic education. Political interest in the educational problem was therefore principally based on socio-economic reasons and directed towards the employment market.[10]

4.3.4. Genuine or artificial? The creation of Priority Educational Areas

Towards the end of 1987, the Socialists came back to power in the form of a Christian-Socialist government. That particular Socialist electoral victory had been preceded by a campaign with the slogan: "Le retour du coeur" ("Back to a government which cares"). For some time already, the idea was circulating that underprivileged social categories should be compensated by the provision of a specific educational policy which would 'discriminate in favour' of children from such backgrounds.

The idea of Priority Education Areas ('Zones d'Education Prioritaire' or ZEP), which followed the example of Great Britain in the late 70's and France in the 80's, was adopted by the Minister of Francophone Education in 1988. The principles behind it are the following:

- On the one hand, the definition of areas which are at a disadvantage according to educational criteria (attendance rate, poor performance, dropout rate, etc.), and according to socio-economic criteria such as the social and occupational status of families, place of work, living conditions, percentage of immigrant families, etc.
- On the other hand, the development of educational projects where learning is based on non-academic disciplines and is open to outside influences. The school system must take into

account the social environment of the child and adapt teaching methods accordingly. Teaching-learning conditions and ideas about the relationship between the school environment and the outside world must be modified. In this way, children who are given a sense of personal worth and responsibility would be able to overcome their rejection of school and make a new, potentially successful start in their education.

In 1988, a working committee was given the responsibility of establishing criteria for defining the different areas. This resulted in the creation of six experimental areas and 26 different educational schemes to be launched at the beginning of the 1989-1990 school year. However, in Brussels, 43 jobs were lost in the 39 schools participating in the ten selected schemes. In the Walloon region, 16 selected schemes are still awaiting the finance to be implemented...

The way in which the P.E.A. policy has been implemented, separately from public statements of intention, is liable to greatly reduce its chances of success, for the following reasons:

- The choice and definition of the areas remains unclear; it is not necessarily the underprivileged areas which have been selected for the schemes;
- It is the schools themselves that are responsible for developing the schemes; the fundamental questions concerning the opening-up of the school system, its interaction with the outside world and its cooperation with various other educational bodies have not been put forward for consideration;
- Many schools have seen the development of P.E.A. schemes as an interesting financial loophole, which might possibly compensate for the budgetary restrictions suffered by education;
- The whole process was carried out urgently, leaving no scope for the schemes to mature, thereby risking the development of compensatory, rather than alternative teaching methods;
- As for resources, when they are not totally absent, they are derisory.

The creation of P.E.A.s is more likely to divert attention away from the serious problems of schooling; it is a cosmetic measure, rather than a real policy of 'positive discrimination'. This is all the more regrettable as a number of 'district partnership' schemes had already been started in 1986, long before the idea was adopted at political level.[11] These were based on the following principles:

- The opening up of schools to the life of the local district in order that all childrens' personal experience should be taken into account by the educational process;

- An educational policy drawn up by each school, aimed at preventing and remedying the premature opting out of school, in cooperation with other local bodies;
- Positive discrimination in terms of resources and support for children from underprivileged backgrounds.
- Consultation between all bodies concerned with education.

They also led to the following achievements:

- Access to literacy for mothers;
- Supervised after-school study-time for children;
- The welcoming of parents into classrooms;
- Library workshops;
- Intercultural music workshops;
- Health education workshops;
- Joint school newspapers;
- Leisure and games amenities;
- Local fêtes and productions, etc.

Some of these existing schemes found themselves outside the areas established in 1989 by the Ministerial Commission and were therefore not in a position to benefit from the finance allocated to the officially adopted schemes, although they operated in greatly underprivileged areas. In general, the expertise acquired in the development of these pilot schemes has not been taken into account where P.E.A.s have been established, in spite of the fact that they had ample opportunity to benefit from their acquired knowledge.

4.4. Continuing Education Policies

People with a poor level of schooling also have the possibility of vocational training and education, either after or separately from formal education. Although most of these forms of training are not specifically geared to such people, even less to illiterates, they are sufficiently important to deserve a mention in this context. After lack of schooling was finally recognised as a social problem, a large number of these existing educational schemes started to focus more on the problems of the under-educated. As we shall see further on, there has also been a tendency to integrate literacy work into existing structures rather than to organise it on a separate basis.

So far, the supply of educational and vocational programmes outside the formal education system for people with a poor basic education has been very inconsistent and dispersed. They are partly provided in the field of adult education, partly in social and cultural training, also in welfare, vocational training and

(re)orientation. Moreover, there are great differences in this respect between the two Communities, due to the fact that these matters have been under Community jurisdiction for some time. In this section, we analyse the various operational educational schemes.

4.4.1. Continuing Education

Initially, the development of socio-cultural education for adults in different Belgian organisations and institutions was not really aimed at people with very few skills. Nevertheless, some such educational programmes, particularly literacy programmes, were realised within the framework of Continuing Education. An important place has been assigned to the socio-cultural sector in recent government measures concerning under-qualified persons. We would therefore like to devote the following paragraphs to a brief description of the field and a comment on the different Community policies.

In chapter 2, we discussed the historical evolution of adult education in Belgium and its fundamental characteristics. Its strength lay in its compartmentalisation and the ever increasing role of the authorities. Politically speaking, the 1967 Royal Decree can be considered as the end of post-war developments and the beginning of Community jurisdiction in these matters. At the same time, it constituted the first important piece of legislation in that area.[12] This liberal Royal Decree ensured the funding of socio-cultural institutions on the basis of minimal criteria. Not only did it lead to the official recognition of the existing large organisations, but also to the recognition of an increasing number of other organisations. Very often, these new organisations were interested in grass-roots schemes which might inject some new dynamism into the socio-cultural sector in the form of protest movements and alternative, politicised culture. As a result of these initiatives, ideas on continuing education became more radical. This had an extremely important effect on the development of literacy and basic education.

For the authorities to play a more active role in this field, it was necessary for Belgium to become a Federal State, and indeed this came about with the constitutional amendments of 1970 and 1980, giving the authorities of each Community control over their own social and cultural policy. Since these differ in many ways, we shall analyse their development after the acquisition of cultural autonomy separately.

THE FLEMISH COMMUNITY

The creation of the Cultural Council in 1971 and the peaceful settlement of ideological and philosophical dissensions as a result of the 1973 Cultural Pact and the similar 1974 Decree, created favourable conditions for a stronger social and cultural policy. Soon after the creation of the Cultural Council, new laws and new modes of enforcement were introduced in the area of continuing education. The 'Hoge Raad voor Volksontwikkeling' drafted new proposals for the future recognition and funding of educational schemes.[13]

The 1975 Decree guaranteed associations greater security and the possibility of acquiring professional status. Particular consideration was given to the desiderata of the large associations which operated on a national scale and were strongly established in Flanders via a network of local branches and voluntary workers. The Decree confirmed the dominant role of the Catholic Church in this area.

Another decree regulated the work carried out in continuing education institutions, State universities and vocational training centres. These institutions are not membership organisations, but they offer various educational programmes to a more or less anonymous public. The 1978 Decree established the conditions whereby these organisations were recognised and subsidised. Not only did it provide a framework for the adult education institutions which had been created in the 60's and 70's and which were very often part of the politicised sector of education, it also promoted the growth of this type of institution. In addition, a number of establishments which were not at first known as educational establishments took advantage of the new subsidies introduced by that decree. However, it was never completely implemented in the 80's due to lack of finance, a fact which slowed down the progress of new educational developments. Under the pressure of political parties, political education institutions obtained their own decree in 1985.

In another important decree, the authorities themselves created coordinating bodies. Increasing state intervention in cultural affairs, the political desire to maintain subsidised denominational schools and the wish to abolish state control over the nature of curricula, created the need for bodies which would be responsible for the preliminary work and would serve as intermediaries between the Community authorities and the State. Each coordinating organisation is there to defend the interests of a certain number of recognised socio-cultural organisations. They tend to reflect the political structure, although there does exist a pluralistic, more forward-looking coordinating organisa-

tion: the 'Bond van Vormings- en Ontwikkelingsorganisaties' (BV-VO). These intermediary bodies have consolidated the 'pillarisation' effect in social and cultural affairs, although some of them have been responsible for many innovative and enriching development schemes.

Ten years after the first decree, many institutions were still not included in a decree; they were still recognised officially under the 1967 Royal Decree. Due to their varied characteristics and to the fact that the authorities wanted the 'Fifth Decree' to give priority to specific problems and target groups, they could not form the subject of a single decree. These divergent objectives and the complex discussions that followed resulted in a rather incoherent 'Fifth Decree' aimed at "the development of Flemish adult education and problems relating to specific target groups." This decree establishes the official recognition and subsidisation of active organisations in the socio-cultural sector, specific target group schemes and initiatives dealing with specific themes such as the question of peace. The importance of the Fifth Decree is that it acknowledged and stimulated existing educational efforts to counteract the lack of basic education in certain social groups, by considering them as priority target groups and granting subsidies to many organisations and projects in that field from 1986 onwards, in particular literacy projects. Its weak point, however, was its incoherent and complex character, coupled with a restricted, insufficient budget.[14] We shall return to the particular significance of the Fifth Decree in our chapter on the development of literacy in Flanders.

Once the 'clover leaf' of decrees had finally become reality, it became clear that there was not enough capital to subsidise all the organisations and projects which were being launched, and restrictions were introduced, sometimes to the detriment of progressive developments in that sector. Then, during the late 1980's, a number of political factions favoured a change of policy on the part of the authorities towards the organisations; but it always remained a policy of subsidies. As a result the possibility of introducing a coherent and innovative cultural and educational policy remained limited and, in practice, it mainly favoured large organisations, which were mostly Catholic. This led to the exclusion of certain schemes in specific educational areas such as the development of literacy and basic education. A brief review of the development of basic education in Flanders will be given further on.

In an effort to bring more coherence to social and cultural policy, public libraries and cultural centres were officially instituted. The 1978 Decree relating to public libraries resul-

ted in a fundamental restructuring of that sector. From then on, all boroughs had to have a local public library and only a very small number of private libraries continued to receive public subsidies. Although the implementation of the decree was immediately questioned for economic reasons, it still managed to encourage the development of public library networks. Because they came to be considered as a public service and an established local amenity, public libraries became a fundamental element of the educational and cultural infrastructure. They also play an important role in the field of basic education and literacy.

The 1965 Royal Decree, the 1973 Decree and the 1975 Royal Decree, all recognise cultural centres as public institutions. They are created by local authorities but are subsidised by the Flemish Community. These cultural centres arose from the need, in the 60's and 70's, for a cultural infrastructure to support the development of the socio-cultural sector. At the beginning, this took the form of host establishments for cultural meetings and events. They soon became versatile institutions with a key role in continuing education. In some cases, they are also used as a lever for certain local reforms. On the whole, cultural centres provide a wide range of educational opportunities for a very large public, mainly elementary skills and a basic general education, but they sometimes also work in the field of basic education for adults with very few skills.

THE FRENCH COMMUNITY

Similarly to the Flemish Community, the French Community saw a great proliferation of continuing education associations towards the end of the 1960's which coincided with the birth of the 'leisure society' and the 1968 social revolution. Many of these organisations had political - often utopian - objectives which were outside the traditional field of political divisions (Liberal, Christian and Socialist), such as the surrender of power to the people.

The huge proliferation of organisations dealing with continuing education led to a new wave of state intervention, with the 1971 Royal Decree and the 1976 Decree. According to E. Grosjean:

> "it is at that time that the authorities made the most noticeable efforts to establish dialogue with associations, to increase their financial support and to include them in the formulation of their policies. The motives behind these changes were firstly that economic growth made them possible, secondly and mainly that the authorities were

> counting on these associations to control the wave of protest - which was in their eyes a disturbing manifestation of youth discontent and questioning brought about by the desire for 'imagination in power' throughout society - (...) or at the very least channel it towards a positive integration into social and cultural development."[15]

The 1971 Royal Decree laid down the conditions of agreement and financial support of the whole spectrum of social and cultural activities "from active or recreational leisure activities and the democratisation of culture (via the diffusion and popularisation of knowledge...), to militant social and political action and social experimentation." Through this particular decree, "politics were introduced into the field of continuing education at the same time as vocational training was first mentioned as a possible practical solution"[16]

However, the huge expansion of continuing education was mainly due to the 1976 Decree.[17] It was formulated along the lines of the previous cultural policy, promoting voluntary organisations and the recognition of their ideological diversity.

One of its greatest contributions, however, was to define the role of continuing education organisations and to specify their objectives which are to ensure and develop, mainly in adults, "the acquisition of analytical and working tools from the viewpoint of social participation and social change." The primary objective must be collective advancement, not individual advancement which is the aim of the Social Advancement System.[18] The State thus rejected a 'paternalistic conception of culture' which implied 'the democratisation of (middle-class) culture' and replaced it by the idea of a 'cultural democracy':

> "Cultural democracy is based on the principle that individuals must jointly be able to freely develop their potential; it affirms equal rights for every individual and undertakes to create the material and spiritual conditions for individuals to exercise these rights; its aim is to achieve a balance between the free development of the individual and the active participation of that individual in the community, and humanity as a whole."[19]

Another important contribution of the 1976 Decree is that it specifies the section of the population it is concerned with: continuing education must "be geared and adapted primarily to the working-class public[20] by taking into account, from the beginning and through consultation with its members, their living conditions and the particular factors which determine these conditions."

The objective of these details was to channel towards working-class people "the additional economic means required for

workers' associations to counteract cultural inequalities." It appeared in the legislation just at a time when progressive leaders were bitterly looking back on what the cultural policy had been until then:

> "(...) the efforts of those who, for the sake of public justice, tried to bring about equal opportunity through access to education and to bring culture to the people, have failed dismally (...)."[21]
>
> "(...) I must admit that my cultural policy, including the 'public education policy', exclusively favoured those citizens who were already privileged educationally. I never realised it (...). I allowed funds which were intended for the underprivileged classes to be swallowed up elsewhere (...)"[22]

According to A. Van Haecht, "One cannot help noticing the similarity between the cultural developments of the 70's and the crisis of the education system brought on by the same calling into question of middle-class 'culture' on the one hand, and 'knowledge' on the other."[23]

Just as the notion of 'positive discrimination' circulated in the 70's in connection with schooling, a number of authors applied the same concept to the 1976 Decree:

> "(...) It establishes the principle of JUSTICE in favour of associations of workers, male and female, housewives, immigrants, and junior employees who suffer the most from public cultural inequalities (...). The importance of the principle of positive discrimination lies in the fact that, on the basis of the legally recognised rights of every citizen, its aim is to allocate a specific budget intended for past situations of inequality. Ideally, it is intended to compensate people who have failed at school due to lack of equal opportunity and who, as a result, have suffered serious educational setbacks. The principle of positive discrimination is valid collectively as well as individually (...)."[24]

With the 1976 Decree, there was a clear shift from the question of the democratisation of education towards adult education. The fact that continuing education began to focus on a working-class public - in the broad sense - represented a new step in the direction of equal opportunity and the elimination of social discrimination in education.

Finally, while the Decree remained flexible where educational methods were concerned, many promoters of adult education schemes believed that continuing education should allow adults to study in an informal, non-traditional atmosphere: teaching methods should be adapted to the student or trainee,

based on dialogue and students' participation in selecting and assessing the content and the training, etc.:

> "It presupposes a break away from authoritarian ideas, methods and training and the introduction of contract teaching and the greatest possible participation from those involved, in the management of their institution."[25]

4.4.2. Vocational training leave and social advancement courses

Social advancement courses are one of the oldest forms of post-school education. For the first time in 1963, a law was passed, compensating workers who went on training courses or attended evening or Sunday classes in order to improve their professional skills. The 1973 Law guaranteed workers paid day-release which enabled them to follow social advancement courses without loss of salary. It gave all full-time workers in the private sector the right to take vocational training leave in order to follow officially recognised courses. These could either be of a general educational nature or specially vocationally oriented. Although the law regulating vocational training leave is still very limited and greatly influenced by the divergence of interests between employers and employees, it represented, for some, the first stone in a much broader set of legal measures designed to guarantee all citizens the fundamental social right to continuing education. The question still remains whether these measures answer the needs of under-educated people. Although unskilled workers may undoubtedly benefit from them and improve their occupational situation, they still do not reflect a real political will to cater for the needs of under-educated people, as this opportunity is only available to a small minority of them.[26]

Many of those who take up paid vocational training leave opt for social advancement courses. This type of training offers a large variety of improvement or reorientation courses at different levels, often in educational establishments which also offer day-release secondary education. They either take the form of technical training courses, with the same options as day-release training, or of language or general courses, mainly organised by private institutions and socio-cultural associations. A distinction is also made between integral subjects and those which are part of continuing education. Considered as a whole, the social advancement system provides a whole spectrum of opportunities, not only in further vocational training, but also in general education and in giving a 'second

chance' to people who were disadvantaged educationally. This last possibility, which was developed in Flanders, is designed to help under-educated people and, to a much lesser extent, completely illiterate people.

More recently, social advancement courses have evolved more and more towards a modular system which allows students to choose the combination of units most suited to their own needs and abilities. There is every indication that the current growth of improvement courses is due to this particular development.

Not much is yet known about the nature of the public attending improvement courses;[27] the question of how much opportunity they provide under-educated people therefore remains debatable. The 1986 Royal Decree on the rationalisation and planning of the social advancement system, did enable some cooperation between that system and continuing education to take place, either in the context of short training courses, or in the context of existing departments or the creation of new departments. Through this cooperation, the Continuing Education Association has been able to open up to a section of the public (or to the whole of the public in the case of the creation of a new department) and to take over a part of the training. The 1986 Decree did not lead the social advancement system to incorporate a minimum level of training in the courses it was offering. Rather, it was in the interest of the social advancement system, due to budget limitations, to cooperate with other educational establishments such as literacy centres. However, the scope is limited.

4.4.3. Adult education

Adult education is intended, more than social advancement, for people who interrupted their schooling and are now in need of a basic education. The idea of setting up training and educational opportunities for poorly qualified adults first appeared in Flanders when a group of women launched a scheme in Louvain in 1980, inspired by the Dutch 'Colleges for Mothers'. The scheme was then taken up by several other Flemish towns and the possibility of obtaining a basic general education was introduced. Nevertheless, during the 80's, the scheme became focused on the provision of a secondary school diploma and the preparation of students for the Secondary Leaving Certificate of the National Examinations Board. The interest in social advancement courses was strengthened by the creation of adult education schemes. The education programme takes largely into account the specific needs of learners and the diversity between them. They must be given

the means to develop and improve their skills. The fact that they participate in the management of schemes, and the pluralistic nature of these schemes, reflects the same concern.

At present, there are eight different establishments in Flanders preparing approximately 500 people between them each year for the secondary education diploma. The running and the financing of these different establishments varies greatly. Three of them are part of Social Advancement, others are run by socio-cultural institutions, and one of them is part of Basic Education. The Education Ministry has also provided special temporary managerial staff, and although the running of these schemes has not yet been finalised, it seems that Flemish adult education will be run partly within the framework of Social Advancement, and partly within the framework of Basic Education.[28]

There is to date little information on the type of student attending adult education courses, but the slightly out of date statistics at the Louvain Centre indicate that there is a large majority of women. In general, the level of schooling does not go beyond the lower secondary education level.

In the French Community, under-educated people only have the choice of taking the Primary Leaving Certificate ('Certificat d'Etudes de Base' or CEB) or the Secondary Leaving Certificate of the National Examinations Board. Since the Royal Decree of 15th June 1984, any person of more than 11 years of age who passes an "ad hoc" exam, is entitled to the CEB. The content of the exam is largely left to the discretion of the District Inspector who organises it. The CEB is essential to obtain a job from the State or to participate in the schemes for the reduction of unemployment. Adults' motives for taking the CEB are manifold: they take it either to overcome their failure at school, to obtain a certificate as a proof that they have achieved what they set out to do, or to obtain a new job, etc. Preparation for this examination is available in a number of Part-time Training Centres, and in some Continuing Education institutions in the context of literacy and post-literacy courses, etc. Preparation for the Secondary Leaving Certificate can be done through correspondence courses, in private schools or in certain Continuing Education institutions.

4.4.4. Vocational training and integration

Where basic adult education is concerned, the authorities became particularly interested in the 80's in educational schemes which concentrated on vocational training and integration. Both social

policy and employment policy gave priority to the under-educated. Many schemes stressed the functional role of training, and new subsidies became available for this type of project. Some of the most important of these programmes are mentioned here:

Within the framework of the National Employment Office vocational training schemes, a number of initiatives were launched from 1984 onwards specifically aimed at the under-educated and the (potentially) permanently unemployed. It must also be mentioned that the standard of the training courses run by the National Employment Office has become much higher and that the selection has become much stricter. The 'schakelprojecten' in Flanders are similar schemes. In the Walloon region, social and vocational training centres have been created to provide unskilled workers with a basic training. In both cases, the emphasis is on the acquisition of the basic skills which are necessary to become reintegrated into the employment market. By providing general and technical training, these centres aim to improve the person's chances in the employment market and to give them a foundation for further training.

In 1987, Mr T. Kelchtermans, the Flemish Education and Training Minister, greatly encouraged vocational training for under-skilled workers in the form of vocational training schemes as well as basic education schemes. In 1989 he also proposed vocational training schemes in the context of the "Weer Werk" campaign. There are many other schemes involved with vocational training and integration which come under the umbrella of basic education. They are either connected with the public employment system via the CPAS, with local community social and cultural projects, or with the fight against poverty. Unfortunately, they tend to be rather fragmented and their status is not clear. Many of them are run in unfavourable circumstances, receiving subsidies from a number of different sources and based on unstable conditions of employment. Furthermore, the overall regulations covering basic education in Flanders are still very vague.

Concerning the French Community, two decrees, passed in 1987, deserve a mention. The first deals with Vocational Apprenticeship Enterprises. These enterprises take in young marginalised and under-skilled young people and give them general and vocational training for two years in a real working environment. The second decree concerns the official recognition of organisations which offer continuing vocational training. It allowed many associations dealing with under-skilled workers and the unemployed, to gain recognition as training workshops. It was also the first legal recognition of illiteracy. It states that : "Priority shall be given to programmes engaged in lasting

social and vocational activities or continuing vocational training, and which are justified by socio-economic needs linked to the stimulation of employment." Its aim is therefore to (re)integrate into the work force those people who were marginalised by the economic crisis, in particular young people in difficulty, illiterates, prisoners and all those seeking work with insufficient training.

The second decree also marked the return of liberalism in public adult educational policy. The first aim was to make the socio-cultural sector profitable.

> "On the one hand, socio-cultural organisations can no longer count on the free redistribution of a non-existent growth surplus; on the other hand, the crisis has made it quite clear that the socio-cultural investment must itself be the factor of economic revival which is more closely linked to the new social objectives."[29]

Its second objective was to reduce the financial support previously given to continuing education associations to a basic survival level and to improve the image of State intervention by allocating the capital liberated in this way to employment schemes, thereby reducing the problems of individual training rather than the critical problems of infrastructure.

> "By ignoring one important dimension, that of vocational integration, in the full knowledge that jobs are scarce and that employment is the necessary condition of vocational integration, the Government is simply going back on the originality and wealth of the contents of the 1976 Decree on continuing education. It is also likely to seriously curtail the real possibilities of social integration: segmenting the various dimensions of vocational integration, i.e. the vocational from the cultural, presupposes that training is the only solution to unemployment and that the latter is entirely caused by a lack of training and skills."[30]

More specifically, this decree will very probably promote a reductionist view of the literacy movement as a vocational integration aid process. In fact, the literacy process has very little effect on vocational integration which, in time of crisis, is more a problem of over-qualification or at least high qualification. Moreover, if efficiency rules, the linking of literacy to vocational integration is likely to cause the literacy process to favour the illiterate elite, those who are more socially integrated and whose illiteracy has more to do with improving their knowledge of the French language than illiteracy proper. This would have the effect of fundamentally diverting

the literacy movement from its initial objectives. It appears that all fringe work in literacy is more or less excluded from the recognition promoted by the Decree. For example, "It can take up to a year to bring together a group of only 15 women who, if they are Moroccan or Turkish, must be encouraged to have discussions among themselves."[31] Only then do some of them wish to attend a literacy course.

4.4.5. Basic Education

We have already pointed out a number of times that in the late 70's, a large number of socio-cultural and continuing education programmes realised the extent of the problem of lack of schooling and began to develop education schemes specifically aimed at these problem social groups. We have already described some of these initiatives in the above paragraphs, and chapters 5 and 6 will consider literacy more closely. In this section we wish to analyse the development of a concept and field that can be considered as a kind of coordinating body: the concept of adult basic education. Following the developments in the 80's in neighbouring countries, Belgium, and Flanders in particular, became interested in the idea of adult basic education, with the aim of structuring and integrating all the various existing educational schemes for under-educated adults. Basic education thus became an essential component of continuing education. In this section, we shall place basic education in its context and describe a number of initiatives;[32] the specific relationship between the Flemish literacy movement and basic education will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.[33]

Despite compulsory education, many adults do not possess the basic aptitudes to enable them to function normally in society. Mainstream educational and training courses only partly cater for these adults' specific training requirements. It is the public recognition of these social and educational problems which was at the start of basic education. Basic education takes the form of a group of different schemes, the objective of which is to fight educational marginalisation and offer under-educated adults training opportunities which correspond to their particular needs.

Basic education opportunities centre around (or should centre around) three main objectives:[34]

- Developing general communication skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic and a reasonable ability to apply these basic skills;
- Developing the ability and the skill required to control one's

own life, for example in relation to questions of health, education, dealing with money, etc., in order to increase independence and self-reliance;
- Developing the necessary aptitudes required in order to participate in working life and the employment market, and earn a living.

Basic education is therefore not simply there to remedy schooling deficiencies; it has a wider role than literacy, although the latter is an essential component of it. Because basic education is oriented towards the provision of broad elementary and functional skills, it covers a number of other programmes.

In paragraph 3.5.2., we pointed out that the development of literacy in Belgium was not an isolated phenomenon. There were many other adult education programmes involved in the provision of elementary education. Apart from literacy schemes, there are in Flanders language courses and other educational opportunities for immigrants, adult basic education, the various educational and training schemes run by the National Employment Office, the 'Omschakelen' scheme for women, the 'Opniew Gaan Leren' scheme and a number of other schemes subsidised by the government under the conditions laid down by the 5th Decree.[35] Some socio-cultural organisations have also developed their own basic education programmes such as the "Doe mee" run by the FOC. There are no doubt a great many more organisations working in the field of social and educational entertainment and the fight against poverty. The special funds allocated to local councils in 1989 and 1990 to fight poverty, for example, led to the development of a large number of local initiatives.

In Flanders alone, there are approximately 10,000 people currently involved in all these different schemes and programmes, of which there are more than 200. Since 1983, the term 'adult basic education' has gradually come to refer to the whole spectrum of educational programmes which are fighting the fragmentation of the system, the lack of planning and the lack of development in vocational training. However the setting up of an integrated educational policy in Flanders was not an easy matter. Already in 1980 the BVVO, which grouped together many progressive socio-cultural organisations, organised an innovative conference at which the principle of continuing education became operational in the form of a network of educational establishments dedicated to the needs of underprivileged people. The European Conference on Basic Education held in 1983 in Scotland also contributed to setting the process in motion. At international level, the developments in the Netherlands and Great Britain reinforced cooperation in this field, culminating in the creation, in 1984, of the 'Platformoverleg Basiseducatie'. This platform wanted the

public recognition of the problems related to lack of basic education and its aim was to stimulate cooperation between the different initiatives. It also gradually put pressure on the authorities to integrate policy on basic education.

The 'Basiseducatie' experimental scheme, started in 1985, represented a great step forward.[36] A report drafted by the VCVO and the Platformoverleg Basiseducatie was favourably received by the then Education Minister, Mr M.K. Poma, and after a period of preparatory field-work, it was finally put into practice, on an experimental basis. The necessary funds were granted for the development of a wide and diverse range of courses for a period of three years in five Flemish institutions[37] working closely with existing projects, socio-cultural organisations and local authorities. Once all points of view had been considered, and the field experience and competence gathered and developed, the foundations were laid for a comprehensive and reliable basic education policy. The experiment was followed and supported by a VCVO team of experts.

Although the organisational, financial and structural support was not always satisfactory, the conclusions drawn from the 'Basiseducatie' experiment will undoubtedly have an important effect on the development of basic education in Flanders for years to come. The conclusions and recommendations can be summarised as follows:[38]

- On the one hand basic education must justify its existence according to the political and cultural principle of continuing education. This principle is based on the idea that the education system must provide learning and training opportunities that are accessible to all, for the duration of their life, and in a whole variety of situations and institutions. On the other hand, basic education must assert itself by promoting the right to basic education as a fundamental social right. This means that under-educated adults can claim their right to basic education on the grounds that the education system has failed in its duty towards them.
- Specialised local and regional Basic Education Centres must be created, with low entrance requirements, organised according to a pluralistic model, aimed at specific social targets, and with their own educational methods. These Centres should provide a whole variety of well-balanced and coherent educational courses and activities. These should be linked to demand and be designed adequately to answer all under-educated adults' training requirements. In other words, they must go beyond the divisions which exist between different types of work. The proposal includes five different channels which can nevertheless be integrated into the same course:

. Linguistic and arithmetical skills;
. Social knowledge and abilities;
. Social guidance;
. Guidance in the choice of additional studies, whether vocational or professional;
. Guidance in the choice of options.

- Basic education must have its own conception of education, including the following important elements:
  . Flexible and open educational planning;
  . The use of students' learning problems as a starting point;
  . The use of experience-related themes;
  . The adaptation of the subject to the student's daily life so that the training may contribute to his or her independence and emancipation;
  . The integration of education and training.

In summary, the experiment led to positive conclusions regarding the overall organisation of basic education, the role of the already established socio-cultural schemes and the support to be given to them.

However, the realisation of a real basic education policy in accordance with these directives turned out to be problematic. Firstly, between the time when the Basiseducatie experiment came to an end and definite new regulations came into force, a whole series of temporary measures had to be taken in order to continue the existing experimental programmes. These measures created tensions between the Offices of Culture and Education and had a negative effect on the programmes themselves and on VCVO support. Furthermore, the inclusion of experimental programmes in the Fifth Decree in 1986 placed them in direct competition with the schemes and initiatives which had already been subsidised for a long time under the terms of the Decree. As a result, 1988 and 1989 turned out to be a time of anxiety for the growing basic education sector, characterised by a lack of clarity, insecurity and a long wait. They were difficult years also for other schemes, literacy schemes among them, which were subsidised under the conditions of other decrees and which hoped to eventually come under the umbrella of basic education. The final legislation governing basic education was delayed several times due to budgetary restrictions within the Flemish Executive but also because basic education had become the focus of political dissensions and controversies over the phenomenon of 'pillarisation'.[39] One dispute concerned the choice between the creation of pluralist centres which would be largely run by local authorities, an option which would be in accordance with the results of the experimental scheme and would have the political support of the BVVO[40] and of a section of the Socialist Party,

and another option - favoured by a section of the Catholic bloc - which was to strengthen the role of existing organisations in this field. The opponents of the latter option feared that it might involve basic education in the pillarisation game and felt that it did not contain enough guarantees of an adequate and vocationally oriented development.

Rather than enter into the details of the lengthy progress towards the final legislation, we shall limit our discussion to its most important aspects.[41] The highly controversial transfer of basic education from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture to that of the Education and Training Minister, Mr D. Coens, was certainly an important step. Initially, it only involved experimental schemes, but in 1990, the established organisations were also governed by the Fifth Decree. To begin with, the administrative and financial legislation of this transfer was not clear. Only in 1990 did the Minister put forward a proposal concerning basic education in Flanders. Like the Part-time Training Centres, 23 Basic Education Centres would be run by the Catholic network and 23 others by the public network. These centres would be run as ASBL's with an important contribution from social and cultural organisations in the private sector. The sub-contracting of programmes to outside organisations was also planned, but it was not well received by many people working in the field, who did not accept the 'pillarisation' of basic education, ideological divisions, the absence of local authority involvement and the danger posed to the development of a vocational adult education network by the sub-contracting of programmes to other organisations.

In April 1990, another proposal was put forward to the Flemish Executive, which took into account the unexpected and heated criticisms of the Education Minister's own back-benchers. It was more in line with the recommendations of the experimental scheme. It recommends that Basic Education Centres should become ASBL's running socio-cultural training courses, improvement courses and vocational training courses; local authorities and the CPAS would also participate in their management. It also proposes the creation of a 'Vlaams Ondersteuningscentrum' and of a Basic Education Council. Having been ratified by the Flemish Executive, this proposal should come into force in Autumn 1990.

At present, the position of the literacy movement vis à vis these Centres is not clear. Everything seems to indicate that, after discussion at local level has taken place, literacy schemes will be integrated into a Centre, which would virtually put an end to the independence of the movement. We shall return to this point in chapter 6 on the literacy movement in Flanders.

4.5. Conclusion: is literacy a public responsibility?

In this chapter we have analysed in detail some political measures that are not directly related to literacy, but rather to the problems of failure at school and lack of basic education. Because they are so varied and complex, these measures do not constitute an educational policy as such, although they do provide a number of services for under-educated and illiterate people. The existing system could also be useful to literacy programmes, as a means of future cooperation. The general impression remains, however, that the authorities have only introduced a number of measures under pressure from grass-roots organisations and that their policy has been mainly geared to solving problems which might be prejudicial to the economy, for example vocational training and integration. Only a small number of these measures contain elements that show a real concern for the needs of under-educated people and a will to adopt an emancipative approach.

In the following chapters, we shall point out that the literacy process in the two Communities was not the result of government initiatives, but the result of sustained efforts by literacy movements and a large number of voluntary workers. We shall also see that, possibly due to the economic recession and budgetary restrictions, the financial support of the authorities has often been poor, despite all the declarations of moral support.

NOTES

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2. Billiet, J. and Huyse, L. 1984. "Verzorgingsstaat en verzuiling: een dubbelzinnige relatie." Idem: 129-151.

3. See: Deleeck, H. et al. 1983. *Het Mattheuseffect. De ongelijke verdeling der sociale overheidsuitgaven.* Deurne.

4. See: Baert, H. 1981. "Kansarmoede en kansarmen in het licht van vormingskansen." In: Leirman, W. and Vandenmeulebroeke, L. (eds.) *Vormingswerk en vormingswetenschap. Een agologisch handboek.* Leuven: Helicon: 177-195;
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5. Vanderkerckhove, L. and Huyse, L. 1977. *In de buitenbaan. Arbeiderskinderen, universitair onderwijs en sociale ongelijkheid.* Antwerp/Amsterdam: SWU: 32.
   See also: Mortier, J. and Verhoeven, J. 1983. "Onderwijsonderzoek en onderwijsbeleid in België." *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie* 4 (1-2): 130-143.

6. Idem: 138-140.

7. Ministry of Education. 1981. *Le cycle 5/8. Où en est-on?* Brussels: Commission de rénovation de l'enseignement fondamental, No. 1; Idem, *Le groupement vertical dans le cycle 5/8*, No. 7.

8. See paragraph 4.4.2.

9. Van Haecht, A. 1985. *L'enseignement rénové. De l'origine à l'éclipse.* Brussels: Institut de Sociologie, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles: 310 and 327.

10. Dewaele, A. et al. 1985. *Tussen school- en werkbank. Deeltijds leren bij 15-18 jarigen.* Leuven: Hoger Instituut voor de Arbeid;
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See also: VCVO. 1988. *Het sociaal-cultureel werk in Vlaanderen. Kaart van het sociaal-cultureel vormingswerk met volwassenen in Vlaanderen.* Brussels.

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17. Idem, pp. 110-127.

18. See paragraph 4.4.2.

19. Hicter, M. *Pour une démocratie culturelle*, p. 327.

20. Specifically, those 80% who do not have a higher education diploma and are not students in higher education.

21. Hicter, M. *Pour une démocratie culturelle*, p. 327.

22. Idem, p. 333.

23. Van Haecht, A. 1985. (see Note 9): 225.

24. Lienard, G. 1987.

25. Demunter, P., Quevit, A. and Verniers, C. 1976. "Université ouverte: Leçon des expériences pilotes." Paper by the General Cultural Foundation, Brussels. Cahier JEB 7: 23.

26. Poncin-Legrand, A. 1979. "La formation permanente des travailleurs." In: Poncin-Legrand, A. et al. *L'éducation permanente en Belgique*. Brussels: Cahier JEB 2: 15-73;
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29. Grosjean, E. 1987. (see Note 15): 122-123.

30. Anon. 1987. "Le décret." *Defipresse* 42: 9.

31. Lienard, G. 1987. "L'éducation permanente: mouvements associatifs et politique culturelle." In: Fondation Marcel Hicter (ed.) (see Note 15): 79.

32. Hinnekint, H. 1983. "Basiseducatie voor volwassenen." *Gids sociaal-cultureel werk* Afl. 6, A.VIII.5;
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Verdurmen, H. 1989. *Opnieuw leren kan. Een kennismaking met de basiseducatie voor volwassenen in Vlaanderen*. Brussels: VCVO.

33. See paragraph 6.4.3.

34. Noor, A. 1982. "Managing adult literacy training." *Prospects* 12 (2), cited in Hinnekint, A. 1987 (see Note 32).

35. See: Verdurmen, H. 1989 (see Note 32).

36. Verdurmen, H. 1986. "Een experiment in basiseducatie in Vlaanderen." *Vorming Vlaanderen* 1 (3-4): 9-30. This publication also contains articles on "Experimenteerplan basiseducatie", "Experimenten basiseducatie - bestuursformule - personeel" and "Ondersoeksplan basiseducatie". See also: Verdurmen, H. 1989 (see Note 32): 41-49.

37. In Leuven, Antwerp, Termonde, Genk/Heusden-Zolder, and the Westhoek. This choice made coordination between city and rural areas and organisations impossible, as well as the social integration of the schemes (either local or regional schemes, or private initiatives with the support of the large existing associations).

38. VCVO. 1989. *Eindrapport Experiment Basiseducatie*. Brussels.

39. For the most important points, see: Corijn, E. 1988. "Beleidsvoorstellen voor de basiseducatie, knelpunten en mogelijkheden. *Vorming Vlaanderen* 4 (1): 21-30;
and the 27th April 1988 Round Table published in: Vandenacker, M. (ed.) 1988. "Rondetafelgesprek over een beleid voor de basiseducatie." *Vorming Vlaanderen* 3 (6): 345-372.

40. Published in: "Ontwerp decreet basisedukatie voor volwassenen." *Koepel V* 15 (1): 16-30.

41. Verdurmen, H. 1987. "Naar een beleidsregeling voor de basiseducatie in Vlaanderen." *Vorming Vlaanderen* 3 (2-3): 165-181;
De Vos, H. 1988. "Toekomst voor de basiedukatie?" *Koepel V* 15 (1): 15-25;
De Vos, H. 1990. "Stroomversnelling in de basisedukatie?" *Koepel V* 17 (1): 23-25.

5. THE LITERACY MOVEMENT IN THE FRENCH COMMUNITY

5.1. Introduction

As a basic form of education for adults who have difficulty in reading and writing, literacy is an important part of training in the French Community. It did not arise from a political desire to tackle these problems but from associations engaged in field work and in constant contact with people who experience these difficulties. Because of their work, these associations finally became recognised and obtained functioning and personnel subsidies. However, these only very partially cover the whole range of literacy activities.

National Education, which has been under Community jurisdiction since January 1989, remained outside these developments. The recognition and the financial support of literacy work is due to Continuing Education and the Department of Social Affairs of the French Community.

5.2. Literacy as a component of continuing education

The concern of certain voluntary public education movements for elementary education (reading, writing and arithmetic) goes back to before 1914. Even then, they showed very little preoccupation with primary or adult education objectives. They were more interested in attracting and helping individuals (mainly manual workers) in institutions which provided a principally ideological education (from moral doctrine to political philosophy).

After 1914 and the law on compulsory education, it was obvious to all, including, it seems, the public education movements, that the primary school system would provide every citizen with a basic education. It was not until 1960 that this conviction was finally questioned and adult literacy courses established.

As a permanent education activity, the literacy movement, not only aims to provide language skills (oral, reading and writing skills) but also the adults' participation in social communication, particularly in areas which require writing abilities, and the self-reliance that such participation leads to. These objectives require a broad educational programme promoting awareness, motivation and the development of individual and group abilities, and leading to a repositioning of the in-

dividual and the group in relation to society as a whole.

The following testimony, from a young Berber woman, expresses it very clearly:

"I grew up in Morocco, in Targuist, in the mountains of the Rif. I was the youngest of a family of four children. I never went to school. Where I lived, in the country, girls did not go to school. At the age of 13, I came to Belgium to join my husband. (...) I was still a child and needed to learn. (...) I did not speak a word of French and was far away from my family.

The first years were awful. Far from the possible help of my family, I had to suffer everything that my husband and other people said. I had no choice. When there was an argument or a conflict of any kind, I could not call my father for help. I had to keep quiet. I kept repeating the same words: "I'm going back to Morocco, I'm not staying here." But I was incapable of returning by myself. So I just stayed and suffered everything.(...)

I learned French at the Gaffi.' During the first years, I didn't attend regularly. At first, I used to go with my mother-in-law, and if she didn't go, I didn't have the courage to go either.(...) Gradually, I gained confidence..., but it took a long time.

At the Gaffi, I learned to read, write, and count. I also went to discussions on subjects like: 'our body', 'the work permit', 'the mutual benefit society', 'family allowance', 'your baby is a person', etc.

So, gradually, I became part of a new world. I was also beginning to communicate with people, first at the Gaffi, with women like myself, country women who led more or less the same life as me. I was beginning to gain confidence in myself and talk to the family, friends and other people. I started participating in discussions because I also had something to contribute.

My teacher Agnès, at the Gaffi, gave me a great deal of encouragement because it was so difficult. Sometimes, I wondered whether it was a good thing that the Gaffi had opened the doors to another world... because I found adjustment so difficult. But Agnès always found the right word at the right moment to keep me going. Now, I want to learn more and more. My eyes have been opened and I have a hunger for learning and discovery..., learning to read, to write, understand history, the news, and learning to discover my own body.(...)

Since I have attended the Gaffi, I listen to the radio and T.V. in a different way... Before, I could hear the noise

> of voices without being able to clearly understand what was being said. Now, I understand most things but when I don't, I ask questions about it.
> Ever since I have been able to speak French, I have felt at home in Belgium. Because I can understand people, I no longer feel afraid. I have also become a different wife: I am no longer the child that he married, but an adult woman, sure of herself and responsible. I have turned into someone whom he did not know, but whom he likes.(...)
> Since I have been to school, I also understand the children more, because I know that going to school, learning and studying isn't easy. I can now understand them better and help them. I take an active part in parents' evenings and I encourage my children to study... I want my daughter to continue school.(...)."[2]

The problems are similar among the very underprivileged sections of the Belgian population. A huge ground work effort is necessary for the literacy courses to succeed; in a first stage, they must help these adults to rid themselves of the guilt that they feel; the length of this stage depends on how socially rejected and excluded these people have felt. This leads to a change in their relationships within the group itself, but also in the rest of society.

A good illustration of this is the important work, based on communication and trust, undertaken by the voluntary workers of the 'ATD Quart-Monde' movement in the 'Samaritaine' district in Brussels. Literacy only became possible (and indeed only constituted an objective for the ATD) by rallying the population to fight for its fundamental rights.

A POPULATION FILLED WITH SHAME

> "Already in the Middle Ages, the 'Samaritaine' district was well known for its poverty; it is disreputable, violence occurs frequently and housing conditions are still very bad.(...) Houses are rented out as bedsits. Above the 'Mascotte' café, beds are rented out for the night.(...)
> Approximately thirty seem to use the café itself as a home and some of them do actually live there.(...)
> Most of the regulars live in the immediate vicinity, in the working-class district of the 'Marolles' which is well known for its extreme poverty.(...)
> The people we meet are mostly unemployed, although some of them do manage to get odd jobs for a brief period of time and with no security, washing dishes in restaurants or doing fairground work in the summer season; others have

their own small independent jobs: scrap metal, chopping salvaged wood for heating; others do odd jobs on the side for small building enterprises (unloading sand from a lorry in an afternoon, transporting rubble, pulling down chimneys, etc.), for a pathetic salary.(...)
Although this particular section of the population is almost exclusively of Belgian origin, more than half cannot read or write. A percentage of them cannot even sign their own name.(...)
Our first contact with these people was through Jean-Paul of the District Committee and we told him of our intention to circulate among the poorest people of the district.[3]
Jean-Paul then introduced us to the café 'Chez Mascotte'.(...) The feeling of shame and degradation is present everywhere. To begin with, most people emphasise anything that might distinguish them from the others, either by embellishing or inventing their personal history and their relationships, or by adopting and exagerating the criticisms that society makes about their companions: "It's the first time I've been here; I've got nothing to do with the rest of them; they're all drunks and good-for-nothings. I've got a son who's an architect... I've got a cousin who's a general",(...). Very rapidly, they began to express this feeling of shame in a more explicit fashion: "They think we stink, we're social rejects, we're treated like scum, they even say we're thick."(...)

RALLYING PEOPLE IN THE FIGHT FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Although the members of the community helped each other on a daily basis, there was a lack of group solidarity. It therefore became necessary to bring up a cause which might serve as a rallying point. In February 1977, the opportunity was given to us by Alfred and Jean-Paul, after two minor events the importance of which we were only to realise later. In the course of a discussion, Alfred (40 yrs old) interrupted us:
- "Today, I received a summons from the juvenile court for my young daughter, but I don't want to go."
- "Why?"
- "With the way I look, I don't stand a chance with them'"
(...)
The whole group tried in vain to persuade Alfred to appear in court, but he defaulted.(...)
A different story involves Jean-Paul, who has been on

social security for several years. He is officially receiving National Assistance on a permanent basis.(...)
However, although Jean-Paul complained, as did the others, of the suspicious, even hostile reception he was given at the social security office, he refused to claim the minimum means of subsistance ('Minimex') to which he was entitled, despite our insistence.(...)
Towards the end of February 1977, Jean-Paul finally gathered the courage to claim his entitlement, because he had the support of the group. The 'Minimex' was granted him.(...)
Because he was the first to claim an entitlement, he had paved the way for the others, who had implicitly delegated him by encouraging him.(...)

THE RIGHT TO KNOWLEDGE

Right from the beginning of our meetings in January 1977, notes were taken of people's comments in the meetings: once a certain trust had been established, the notes were taken during the weekly meetings and read out to the group the following week.
The reading of the notes increased the group's self-respect because their own notes, and the story of their struggle were thus given back to them. It implied and underlined the importance of being able to read and write in order to lead a campaign.(...)
This 'performance' took on a highly symbolic character for these people, nearly half of whom were illiterate. Everyone would stop talking when the summary was read out and often the juke-box was even turned down.(...)
Gradually, as the group began to become conscious of the value of their opinions which so far had been completely ignored, those in the group who were illiterate began to want to learn to write. They dictated to others, reports or ideas that they wished to convey to the whole group and were afraid to forget.
If their authors wished, these notes were then read out at the meetings.
At the same time, the group was deciding on the nature of the delegation it wished to send to the Local Committees. It should include a minimum of two people, at least one of whom should be able to read and write in order to make a full report to the group afterwards.
If a member of the group was in prison or in a sanatorium, it became normal practice to write to them and send them

copies of the summaries of meetings. Those who could read regularly brought newspaper articles related to the topic of discussion or to their past experience.
In short, reading and writing were increasingly viewed as the most important means of fighting exclusion.
In September 1977 at the end of a meeting, Jean-Paul told us that he wished to become a 'Quart-Monde' delegate and would like to learn to read and write.(...)
In February 1978, the Belgian branch of the 'ATD Quart-Monde' Movement decided to open a literacy school for adults.
The 'Samaritaine' group sends two of its delegates to the school: Jean-Paul and Patrice; it clubs together to pay the course's nominal fees of 100 Belgian francs per month. It takes place twice a week and the group encourages its delegates to attend regularly.
Jean-Paul is 38. He is the eldest son of a poor Brussels family and has hardly known his father:"When I was little, I often rummaged in dustbins to help my mother who could not feed us. I never went to school. I went to a remedial class and all I had to do was sort out pictures in a box. I never learned a single letter. At the age of 12, I was placed with foster parents. Because I no longer received love and affection, I couldn't learn to read or write. Then I was sent on a farm where I had to work, but they never taught me to read or write...."
Patrice comes from a family of scrap merchants, but less is known about his past. He was brought up for several years by his grandmother. He told us that he was caught by the police for stealing turnips and potatoes in a neighbouring field because they did not have enough to eat at home.
Jean-Paul continued to receive the minimum subsistance benefit he had obtained the previous year; it gave him a certain amount of security which made long-term training possible. The situation for Patrice is less clear-cut; he is himself an independent scrap merchant and his income is very irregular. He often doesn't know what tomorrow will bring.(...)
In the meetings, Jean-Paul and Patrice often talked about their motivations for attending the literacy course:"Learning to read has given me self-esteem; I go to school because I want to become a delegate."
Patrice said: "In the old days, being able to read was not necessary for survival. Now you have to be able to read. I used to be ashamed because I had to ask a friend to read or write my letters."

> The first letter he ever wrote was addressed to his mother, whom he hadn't seen for more than a year, and, as he wrote, the positive feeling of having acquired these skills replaced the feeling of shame...
> Both received a lot of support from the other members of the group. After a few weeks, Jean-Paul remarked:
> - "I can't possibly do it by myself."
> - "You must continue, or else I won't even look at you any more." replied Cyrille.
> - "I'm proud of you because you want to learn", said Nicole (one of the best at writing), and her comment reflected the opinion of the whole group.(...)"[4]

These two examples show that literacy work is a fundamental component of continuing education because, even in cases where such underground work is not necessary, it leads to a change in the opinion people have of themselves and of their relations with the outside world.

5.3. From the first experimental literacy projects to the coordination efforts[5]

In the Belgian French Community, the literacy process began towards the end of the sixties. At the time, it involved very isolated projects run by a handful of associations for a very small public, mainly made up of immigrants. Examples of these are the 'Ecole d'Alphabétisation de Quaregnon', the schemes run by the SPIA in Liège (Service Provincial d'Immigration et d'accueil), the 'Collectif d'alphabétisation' and the CATI (Centre d'Alphabétisation pour Travailleurs Immigrés) in Brussels.

Social advancement schemes for immigrant workers were at the origin of these literacy schemes: rather than systematically help them in their dealings with the administration, it seemed more sensible to help them to learn the language, both spoken and written, or even to promote the socio-political awareness and the social and cultural development of these sections of the population within a more global social and cultural scheme.

In 1977, the first public demonstration led by ATD Quart-Monde took place in Paris, denouncing the existence of illiteracy (among the native population) and challenging the authorities in these terms:"Our aim must be that in the next ten years, there will be no more illiterates among us.." Following that demonstration, the Belgian branch of the Movement implemented a literacy policy, as part of an overall social advancement pro-

gramme for the underprivileged classes which the Movement was attempting to reach and mobilise. A book published in 1982 entitled "Les illettrés et nous, en Wallonie et à Bruxelles", describes these first literacy efforts.

In 1982, a document was published by the 'Collectif d'alphabétisation' which had initially held discussions on the use of cable T.V. to help illiterate people. It is entitled "Projet de Campagne d'Alphabétisation à Bruxelles." It is based on the fact that illiteracy is a social problem, that it is due to the marginalisation of significant sections of the population in an advanced industrialised society.

In their eyes, a literacy campaign is a necessity. Its objective is to "make the whole of society aware of the problems of illiteracy, by encouraging awareness in future organisers and by ridding illiterate people of their guilt feelings, and to put thousands of voluntary organisers into contact with thousands of illiterates; finally, to create between them a certain solidarity ("Let all those who know teach those who know not").[6]

The best way to achieve that end is with the use of television, as a means of promoting awareness and training, the support of associations and voluntary workers as well as an 'Illiteracy Help Service' dealing with information, telephone staff, the training of voluntary organisers and the publication of educational information brochures. In addition, a continuous system of evaluation must assess the progress of the campaign and allow for a possible readaptation of educational methods in the light of the results obtained.

The 'Collectif d'Alphabétisation' and other socio-cultural groups are also participating in the creation of the Brussels DEFIS association (Association for Development, Employment, Training and Social Integration). The aim of this organisation is to coordinate its fight against illiteracy in the whole of the French Community, in partnership with three other regional training associations for under-educated adults: 'Canal Emploi' in Liège, the FUNOC in Charleroi (the Charleroi Open University Foundation) and the RTA in Namur (Radio and television channel). These associations have also realised that a large proportion of the under-educated people they train are illiterate, rather than in need of improving their knowledge and skills, which is what they first set out to do.

The coordination of the activities of these organisations constituted a de facto organisation: Lire et Ecrire, which publicised its name for the first time on 8th September 1983 on International Literacy Day and which extends to the whole of the French Community the Scheme started by the 'Collectif d'Alphabétisation pour Bruxelles'.

5.4. The development of a mass campaign

5.4.1. How to reach illiterate people

Faced with a population of 200,000 to 300,000 illiterate people, Lire et Ecrire launched a huge mass campaign, similar to the 1975 British campaign, but with a much smaller budget. It included television information programmes and a publicity campaign inviting people interested in the courses and those interested in teaching on a voluntary basis to come forward. On 8th September 1983, the switchboard operating from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.[7] received 644 calls, 374 of which were from people interested in attending courses, 155 were offers to teach on a voluntary basis, and 114 were enquiries. It amounted to one call every 90 seconds.[8] Another 496 calls were taken on 9th September.

For the organisers of the event, it was a real success. The campaign brought to light the existence of illiteracy, even among the Belgian population. Of the 374 requests for classes on 8th September, 74% came from Belgian people.[9] It also highlighted the fact that a proportion of the under-educated population had been through the compulsory education system with a school leaving age of 14.

Among the Belgians who called, 8% had not attended school at all, and 57% had left before the end of primary school. Their illiteracy was therefore not due to lack of practice (regressive illiteracy) and did not limit itself to the elderly, since 81% of the calls were from people under the age of 50. In April and September 1984 two more media campaigns were launched, but, this time, on a much smaller scale and with less response from the public they were aimed at.

Having received the calls, the aim was to rapidly provide literacy classes with the help of voluntary teachers, either by using existing Literacy Centres, or by setting up small literacy units everywhere, where a voluntary teacher would take on one or more learners. This turned out to be more difficult than expected: not only did a lot of volunteers withdraw,[10] but the others needed to be trained, and supply and demand had to be matched. In some regions of the French Community, there were still no facilities to accommodate classes, and, generally speaking, literacy activities were restricted to urban areas. Moreover, voluntary staff were on the whole unwilling to travel. Nevertheless, a number of literacy schemes did come about as a result of these awareness campaigns.

In 1985-86, 'Lire et Ecrire' decided to launch another campaign, along the same lines as the 1983 campaign, but on a much larger scale. For that purpose, it obtained more financial

support from the authorities: 80 Special Temporary Executive posts for a year and a large subsidy from the European Social Fund.

The specific objective of this campaign was to develop the network so that literacy courses would really take place everywhere. Some time previously, 'Lire et Ecrire' had already suggested to its promoters, the MOC and FGTB,[11] that it should organise the campaign in the four regions of the French Community which had not previously been covered: the Walloon Brabant region, the Province of Luxembourg, Western Hainaut and the Central region (Mons - La Louvière).

The task of the 80 Special Temporary Executives was to establish and set in motion local and regional coordinating bodies, in order to lay the foundations for a literacy course network which would correspond to demand. These included:

- Maintaining contact with institutions or coordinating staff, so that they should promote awareness among their own public;
- Promoting general public awareness;
- Recruiting voluntary staff;
- Training voluntary staff;
- Bringing potential learners in contact with voluntary staff.

The 80 people taken on were therefore not employed as teaching staff. All teaching was done on a voluntary basis.

The number of enquiries received as a result of International Literacy Year in September 1985, were disappointing: only 350 enquiries during the month and a half that followed.

From October 1985 to May 1986 (with an interruption from December to March), 20 ten-minute programmes of 'Allo? Bonjour!', inspired from the English series 'On the Move' were broadcast on the French-speaking Belgian television channel RTBF, and a soon afterwards, on two Community television channels ('Canal C' of Namur and 'No Télé' in Tournai). They consisted of two series of 10 satyrical comedy programmes intended to be informative and stimulate interest in the following way:

- Keeping people motivated until they actively enrolled in a course;
- Encouraging perserverance in learners;
- Helping illiterate people rid themselves of their guilt feelings and making literate people become aware of the fact that illiterate people do exist and that illiteracy does not mean stupidity.

These programmes produced very few calls (only 59 requests for classes and 8 offers of volutary work), mainly because they were broadcast at 10 a.m. on Saturday mornings. A qualitative assessment[12] of the positive effects of information, awareness, guilt reduction and encouragement to attend classes highlighted the

fact that it is mostly immigrants who identify with the illiterate role - although it is very much a Belgian phenomenon - while Belgian people tend to be unable to identify with the role of someone who accepts all his misfortunes with good humour and feels no sense of shame about his illiteracy.

This series of programmes marked the end of the publicity and recruitment television campaign by the literacy movement. On the one hand, the 1985-86 campaign was not as successful as the 1983 campaign results led to believe. There was a stagnation, even a reduction in demand, rather than an increase.

This was partly due to broadcasting problems. Unlike what had happened in the United Kingdom,[13] it turned out to be very difficult to obtain peak viewing times for these programmes, either from the Belgian National Television channel, or from the Community channels, all the more because it happened to be a series which had to be integrated with the other T.V. programmes, rather than a one-off programme (as it had been on 8th September). Other factors also came into play, since, in the United Kingdom, where the broadcasting of the series had been better, there had also been a significant decrease in demand in the past three years, even though demand had been much higher at the start.

> "One undoubtable fact about resorting to the media, is that many people are recruited at the beginning. After that, the recruitment growth rate seems to slow down significantly. In fact, after a while, more effort has to be deployed to keep the numbers of participants up at the beginning, as well as other means of recruitment"[14]

A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that those illiterates who expressed a wish to attend literacy classes as a result of the media campaign, belong to an illiterate elite that has acquired technical and communication skills, and a socio-vocational level which makes those people aware of the social handicaps and limitations imposed by the inability to write.

> "Experience showed that most of the people who had responded to the campaign were already motivated, and that they did not belong to the most underprivileged sections of the population. As for the others, because they were unable to view themselves as potential students, they remained completely impervious to the proposed centralised scheme (...). The scheme created a discrimination between an elite which was prepared to take part in an educational process, and the rejected majority which has to cope with far more urgent problems."[15]

This would indicate that the facts do not support the ideas of the promoters, who, according to the English, suffered from a

'technocratic prejudice' whereby illiterate people are supposed to rush forward in hoards as soon as there is a little publicity on measures concerning them.

Furthermore, the effects of the mass campaign were beginning to make themselves felt in the field. 'Lire et Ecrire' had thought that the demand could be met by developing local and regional branches. However, the fact that both supply and demand had been created simultaneously led to a long delay between the moment a request was made and the moment it was answered. These delays were particularly serious if one considers that the "drop-out threshold often occurs during the third week: the large number of intermediaries and the long delays between the initial 'psychological leap' and the actual beginning of teaching will sometimes have tested the patience of potential learners and created a real barrier."[16]

This problem, added to the problem of matching supply and demand geographically, and to the problems inherent in using untrained voluntary staff, highlighted the weak points of the campaign. As the experimental stage progressed, it became evident that the existing facilities could only be considered as very temporary and that their medium and long-term viablility had to be ensured. This was all the more urgent as the coordinators' posts had ended in the summer of 1986 and had not been renewed for 1986-87.

5.4.2. The recruitment of voluntary teaching staff

Apart from recruiting illiterate people, the campaign launched by 'Lire et Ecrire' was also aimed at recruiting voluntary literacy teachers. The initial intention was to develop a large movement of solidarity that would attract voluntary teachers through what some have called[17] militant voluntary work and which is characterised by a political commitment to a cause, etc.

In practice, however, most of the volunteers turned out to be charity workers,[18] motivated by the ideas of 'charity' and 'good will' promoted by the Catholic Church, albeit in a secular form. In terms of literacy, it corresponds to what J.P. Hautecoeur calls the 'Humanistic' or 'Traditional' model: According to the humanistic or traditional model, illiterate people were poor rejected people who bore the scars of humiliations accumulated over the years. Ideologically and in practice, literacy work gave priority to the non-professional, warm, personal and self-fulfilling dimension."[19]

The use of voluntary teachers gradually gave rise to a number of staff-related problems:

- A high turnover of staff: a kind of 'natural selection' occurs after initial information and initial training. In addition, there is a high turnover among the teachers who decide to stay on;
- A serious lack of voluntary teachers who are qualified to take literacy classes. This is partly due to the high turnover, but also to the problems of matching supply and demand (voluntary staff are reluctant to travel, are not flexible in terms of timetable, and do not always wish to work with certain types of people, such as the handicapped, or immigrants, etc.);
- A lack of teaching ability: very few voluntary teachers have adequate teaching qualifications. They therefore tend to reproduce the traditional teaching model. The same problem also arises in qualified teaching staff, particularly retired school teachers who have a tendency to use a school room approach. Furthermore, some teachers attach too much importance to maintaining good relations with their students, to the detriment of other considerations. Finally, many voluntary teachers are not interested in taking part in new available training courses, looking for recent teaching literature (even when it is easily accessible) particularly when their qualifications are poor or out of date;
- Voluntary teachers are not interested in participating in any activity which goes beyond the course itself. We mentioned above that they take very little interest in available training courses, although they seem to be more interested if they are organised locally, even more if they are organised by their own association, or if they are very practically oriented and geared to an already existing need. Another problem is that a number of them are not interested in meeting their colleagues in order to coordinate courses or discuss problems, even when they are in the same area, or in the same group.

In short, voluntary teachers do not have at all the same profile as remunerated teachers doing the same type of work in the socio-cultural sector, who are used to calling and organising meetings, discussing objectives and methods, and who are open to social and cultural differences. Voluntary teachers who do have that profile are either militant, or professional voluntary workers. They are people who assume a professional role and generally work full-time on the programmes. While they are giving their time for the benefit of others, their primary objective tends to be different: for example, to acquire professional experience or the eventual creation of their own post.[20] Militant voluntary teachers have tended to be on the decline since the resurgence of individualism in the eighties, while the number of professional voluntary teachers is increasing, due to the persistent economic

crisis.

Over and above the problems relating to the use of voluntary staff, more fundamental and serious social elements are at stake; mainly, the refusal of the authorities to take on a duty which is theirs to ensure equal rights generally, and, in this particular case, to ensure that all citizens have access to a basic education by training and paying the staff that is required. Through voluntary work, literacy has become a very economical sector of continuing education.

Estimates indicate that an adult attending a literacy course in Great Britain costs the community no more than £50 per year, in other words far less than a child at school or an average student.[21] The same argument could be applied to Belgium, but unfortunately, there is not enough available data.

5.5. Centering the Literacy Campaign around existing Associations

In 1986, following the problems we have just mentioned (recruitment of illiterates, the gap between the campaign objectives and existing facilities, the problems of using voluntary staff), it became necessary to redirect the campaign towards more qualitative, rather than quantitative, objectives.

With this in mind, a working document was drafted in 1986 by 'Lire et Ecrire'. It was entitled: "Plate-forme d'alphabétisation dans la Communauté Française" ("The French Community Literacy Platform"). It stated that "in order to give the literacy movement a qualitative dimension, the campaign objectives should be defined along two separate courses of action operating at different levels, the local level and the socio-cultural level.

The local level includes:

- Organising courses in locations where there is a demand for them, so that they may be geographically and socio-culturally accessible to the under-educated public;
- Developing schemes in accordance with public demand (latent or expressed);

The socio-cultural level includes:

- Working in close cooperation with existing associations which might be interested in adopting the scheme on a long-term basis, and thereby integrate literacy into the association network. It would become the literacy movement network;
- Recruiting learners and teachers via these associations and thereby involving them in a programme which is no longer a charity effort, but a political one (in the broad sense of the term).[22]

These two levels, involving local and organisational activities, function hand in hand to the extent that continuing education movements and associations (the socio-cultural level) organise the courses and deal with enquiries and therefore also play a local role as far as the target population is concerned."[23]

In this way, the regional and local coordinators no longer have to create literacy units from scratch by finding a voluntary teacher and a handful of willing learners: they work in close cooperation with all the associations involved, to stimulate the creation of an integrated network of literacy courses and the inclusion of voluntary workers in these associations.

The integration of the literacy movement into the association network was not entirely new. The process had, to some extent, already been started, but had been overlooked in the organisation of the mass literacy campaign, because its primary objective had been to obtain quick results with the largest number of people.

Since 1986, the literacy movement has once again focused on the association network, to such an extent that literacy schemes functioning outside the network have become marginalised. The type of association which includes literacy courses in their range of activities is very varied: the Open University, immigrant community cultural associations, immigrant womens' associations, cultural centres, youth centres, baby clinics, local social centres, continuing education centres for workers' associations, admission centres, social services, etc.

The integration of literacy into the association network seems all the more important as the coordinators currently only have temporary contracts which are often not renewed at the appropriate time. In 1986-87, for example, literacy work had to be carried out virtually without coordinators for 16 months. As a result, many literacy activities run by voluntary workers who had previously been organised and supported by coordinators, and which were run outside the association network, gradually disappeared. In Luxembourg, for instance, where literacy activities had developed on the basis of the 1985-86 model, there were 50 voluntary teachers in February 1986: by 1987, due to the absence of coordinators, there were only 11 (an 80% reduction). In other areas where literacy activities were already integrated to some extent in the association network, because some associations were completely independent from 'Lire et Ecrire' for personnel and subsidies, the absence of coordinators did not have such a disastrous effect. Literacy work continued, particularly in cases where the associations were not affected by government economic restrictions such as the reduction of jobs laid down by the Unemployment Reduction Programme.

Although the situation had improved in 1988, it was precarious once more at the start of 1989. Coordinating staff was reduced to two or three people per region.[24] The future remains uncertain, which means that the work of coordinators is greatly handicapped, they have to limit themselves to maintaining existing activities and groups, without developing new ones. However, the situation is now less serious that it was in 1986-87, due to the integration of literacy in the association network.

5.5.1. The Recruitment of Learners

After 8th September 1987 (International Literacy Day) recruitment efforts concentrated less on the media. Rather, the media were used to increase public awareness of the persistence of illiteracy in industrialised countries, of its causes and its consequences.

Promoting the awareness of the illiterate public was done at a far more local level, enabling supply and demand to be properly matched; recruitment only took place where there were adequate facilities.

The various recruitment methods used are listed below:

- Through the association network, literacy recruitment is carried out directly, either as a result of enquiries from people who are members of these associations for reasons other than literacy, or through contacts between organisers and teachers in the different associations;
- advertisements on walls, on the radio or in local newpapers;
- word of mouth;
- publicising literacy courses in clocking-in queues;
- through local institutions, public services and people in constant contact with the target population, such as the Employment Office, the Social Services, doctors etc.

These recruitment methods had already been used before 1987, particularly by associations which had been running literacy schemes before the 'Lire et Ecrire' campaign, and also by those with a more recent experience, but which had been part of the association network for some time. The changes were therefore mainly a question of emphasis.

Although available figures on people attending literacy courses are incomplete, it appears that there has been an increase in attendance since 1986: 2,000 learners in June 1986, 2,400 in December 1988, and 2,600 in December 1989. These figures show that even without the support of television, the recruitment rate can remain stable among people who are

potentially interested in literacy courses. It is impossible to define the literacy public in greater detail, but it does seem that by recruiting at a local level, the movement manages to reach illiterates from social categories where illiteracy is definitely greater (this includes Belgian illiterates), rather than simply an 'elite'.

5.5.2. The integration of voluntary staff

Following the 1985-86 experiment, it became clear that literacy activities could not simply be left to voluntary workers who were not in a position to follow up their work beyond their relatively brief appointment, or to assume responsibility for activities either upstream or downstream from the course itself (recruiting learners, finding premises, finding post-literacy placements, etc.), and generally to work on a more global level. Consequently, activities were as far as possible (re)centred around associations, beyond the personal commitment of voluntary staff.

Voluntary staff integration is not sufficient, however: associations must ensure the continued educational training and support of voluntary teachers in order to provide an optimum solution to problems encountered along the way. The amount of training and support varies, but generally speaking it involves:

- A selection process: some associations select voluntary workers on the basis of an interview aimed at assessing motivation, self-confidence, cultural and educational awareness, commitment to the spirit and the objectives of the association, etc. One particular association using this type of interview technique has recorded that one in three applicants is taken on;
- Teacher training: a number of associations train their voluntary staff, others provide individual educational guidance, feedback on training, organised at regional level, and teaching resources;
- Management: some associations organise teachers' meetings in order to organise and coordinate courses, and implement educational or other schemes, etc.

Another development is the creation of associations by groups of voluntary workers, which the following two examples will illustrate:

The first example is ALPHA 5000 in Namur. ALPHA 5000 was created in 1985 by a committee of unemployed workers belonging to the FGTB ('Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique').[25] Literacy activities began on a voluntary basis. In the course of

that year (85-86), two people obtained a one year CST contract, then returned to voluntary work. In 1988, there were three more contracts, but in 1990, only one person was employed at ALPHA 5000 on a contractual basis. Apart from its voluntary staff, ALPHA 5000 has a permanent attendance quota of 30 people (the official number of students is greater). Most of them attend classes every morning and two evenings a week. In addition to teaching, some voluntary teachers also contribute to the management of the association, to the public awareness campaign and external relations in general, organise in-house training, participate in the Namur regional coordination, and are themselves teachers on a literacy teachers' training course organised by the Province of Namur.[26] In order to ensure the smooth running of literacy courses, much time and effort is spent raising finance or solving practical problems. ALPHA 5000 had to change premises three times in five years, thus involving the teachers in activities that had nothing to do with the courses themselves. A number of educational schemes have been planned (post-literacy courses, vocational reintegration, etc.), but they cannot be implemented due to a lack of funds. Potential learners have to be turned down because there are not enough teachers. ALPHA 5000 estimates that it requires at least 10 permanent members of staff in order to properly realise its programme: 4 teachers in the morning, two in the afternoon, one in the evening, one secretary-book-keeper and accountant, one public relations officer, etc. However motivated they may be, teachers can no longer cope with this voluntary work-load which has been imposed on them for four years.

As a member of an unemployed workers' committee and functioning solely on the basis of voluntary staff, ALPHA 5000 has deservedly gained recognition as a local association for the unemployed. It has become an important literacy centre in the Province of Namur and is unfortunately in danger of disappearing along with all the educational experience accumulated since 1985.

Our second example is the association ALPHA TUBIZE in the Walloon Brabant region. ALPHA TUBIZE was created in 1984, following the mass campaign organised by 'Lire et Ecrire'. After a training course organised by the Socialist Women's Provident Society ('Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes'), a group of Tubize inhabitants decided to set up a small communal centre, giving lessons in reading and writing, and repolishing different skills. Since 1984, the association has grown, developed a structure, dispensed knowledge and reached a greater public.

ALPHA TUBIZE functions as a team, which means that the organisers participate jointly in the project, share their

knowledge and responsibilities, and contribute to the activities of the association (classes, meetings, training, etc.). Since the association was created, its teachers have committed themselves to developing its activities, a specific educational programme adapted to demand, and to increasing awareness among the public concerned. The running of the courses and administration are also taken care of by a team of 12 voluntary teachers. ALPHA TUBIZE has seen a large increase in its number of learners. The problems that it faces have therefore nothing to do with encouraging public awareness, but rather with the lack of permanent teaching staff, the need to find appropriate premises and adequate finance: ALPHA TUBIZE has no permanent staff and is subsidised on an annually renewable basis. There is no long-term guarantee and the association is therefore in a precarious situation which could discourage both teachers and learners as well as initiative. However, the fact that it has existed for five years clearly reflects the determination of those involved to develop it further. ALPHA TUBIZE continues to evaluate the scheme as a whole and its work, on an on-going basis, and to clarify its short-term and long-term projects and objectives.

These objectives can be summarised as follows:

- increasing the number of students;
- increasing the teaching time;
- working out a teaching programme which is adapted to public demand;
- developing a much wider network of training, social and cultural action for underprivileged people, in collaboration with other TUBIZE associations. This, of course, requires personnel and finance.

These two examples clearly illustrate the problems arising from using militant voluntary workers who then become professional and who should be remunerated, if the scheme is to become firmly established.

5.5.3. The limitations of integrating literacy in the association network

The integration of literacy in the association network is indeed an improvement on the previous system which we called 'the mass campaign'. However it is still far from satisfactory for the following reasons:

- The association network is unevenly distributed over the whole French Community territory. It is more developed in urban areas than in rural areas, where few associations are involved in socio-educational work. There are also serious practical

problems: the rural population is scattered, which means that a lot of time and money must be spent on travel and that it is difficult to bring the learners together for group work.

- Associations do not have enough funds at their disposal to develop the literacy sector. Because it is relatively new, it is often regarded as an 'extra' activity, and because there is no additional staff to allocate to that sector, literacy remains a marginal activity in many associations. Those who do wish to develop that sector must liberate staff for that purpose, often to the detriment of other activities. In practice the involvement of associations in literacy varies greatly, from the loan of premises to taking charge of all literacy activities. The proportion of literacy work in relation to other activities varies from 5% to 100% (in associations which are totally dedicated to literacy). In terms of staff, the number of hours per person varies from two hours per week (for some organisers and teachers) to more or less full-time work (which is much less frequent). In the latter case, the training of voluntary workers and the organisation of classes is good, both in terms of time (number of hours per week, enrolment of new learners, etc.), and in terms of quality.
- The employment contracts of the staff in the association sector. The majority of the staff are taken on under specific government unemployment reduction schemes, making the associations dependent on these regulations[27], and uncertain as to their future. Because they are financially and socially unattractive, these terms of employment contribute to a high turnover of staff. Moreover, because these unemployment reduction schemes are aimed specifically at the categories of workers where unemployment is highest (i.e. the less qualified unemployed), literacy teachers tend to have a very poor level of training (lower than school teachers). In Brussels, approximately 40% of paid literacy teachers are less qualified than the A1 minimum level for school teachers.
- The lack of adequate educational training among the association personnel without doubt constitutes a handicap for the training of voluntary teachers. This problem is reinforced on the one hand by the high staff turnover which prevents qualification through experience, and on the other hand by the limited time brackets allocated to literacy, which greatly hinder the availability of members of staff for literacy teacher training.

More funds are needed in order to overcome these limitations, so that literacy action may truly correspond to the needs of its public, which are an integral part of the fundamental right to

education.

On this subject, E. Grosjean makes an interesting distinction between public responsibility and voluntary initiative.[28] In the case of activities, the significance and social contribution of which depends primarily on the commitment of people to a cause, an interest, and their subjective conception of ethical or aesthetic values (leisure activities, art, etc.), state intervention could limit itself to subsidies aimed at promoting equal opportunity, but leaving to those responsible the task of raising a proportion of the necessary capital. But in the case of activities related to the right which every member of society has to remedy the particular problems they are faced with (mainly educational, information and communication problems), state intervention should take the form of a total reimbursement of the cost of the activity in real terms. It is quite unacceptable that the authorities should pass off responsibilities that society recognises as being theirs, by exploiting the dynamism of a number of small groups, at a minimal cost.

5.6. The Regional Development of Literacy Networks

While the development of literacy networks was effected in a global, standard fashion in all the eight 'Lire et Ecrire' regional areas, regions were nevertheless given a lot of independence in order to enable them to adapt the scheme to regional sociological, cultural or practical requirements.

The following examples, originating from four of the eight regions (Brussels, Walloon Brabant, Western Hainaut - Charleroi and the Botte du Hainaut - and Luxembourg) illustrate the differences which exist between the regions in terms of literacy development.

5.6.1. Brussels

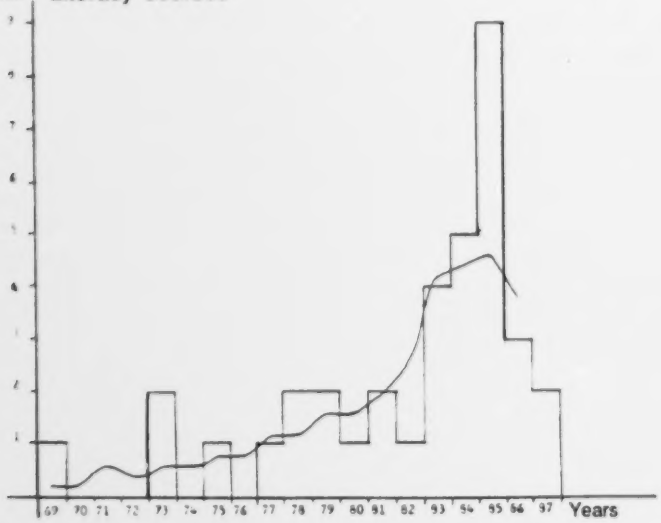
Brussels is the region with the most ancient literacy methods. The 'Collectif d'Alphabétisation' opened its centre in 1969, and the CATI (Literacy Centre for Immigrant Workers) was one of the first associations to provide literacy courses. In 1983, when the 'Lire et Ecrire' media campaign was first launched, 23 associations already had established literacy courses, the equivalent of 43% of associations involved in literacy activities.

When the Brussels coordinating body for the literacy campaign was created in DEFIS, contact was made with associations

which were already involved in literacy work, and with others which were in contact with under-educated sections of the public and likely to be interested in including literacy courses in their activities. Graph 5.1. shows that from 1983 onwards, there was an increase in the creation of literacy courses within associations.[29]

Most frequently, literacy courses were created because a particular association became aware, as a result of its other activities, of the necessity to organise classes in French oral expression, reading and writing. As a result of the 'Lire et Ecrire' media campaign launched on the occasion of International Literacy Day (8th September 1983), many voluntary teachers were recruited and, when they remained dedicated, either complemented the work of remunerated teachers within an association, or formed independent literacy groups in their own borough. The latter only represent 10% of literacy groups in Brussels.

Graph 5.1. Literacy courses

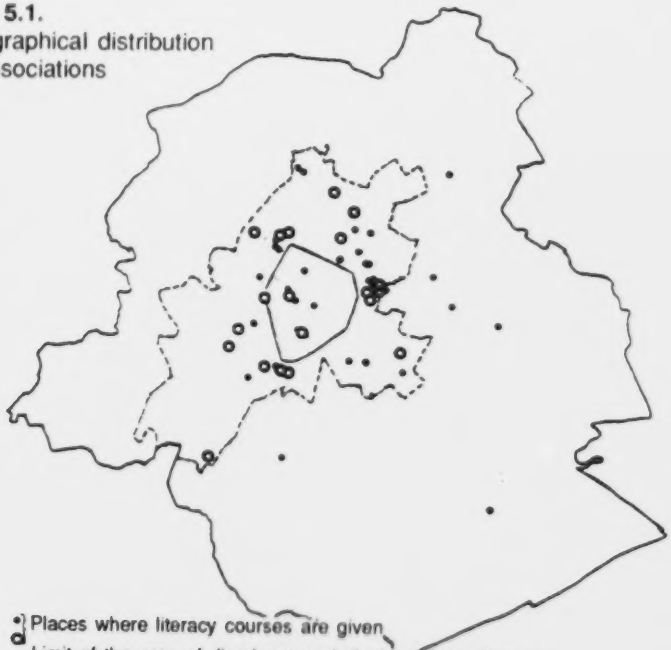


Geographically speaking, literacy courses tend to concentrate in the Brussels industrial areas, and, in general, in inner-city areas, usually inhabited by a population with a very low income and consisting mainly of workers and immigrants. Approximately 87% of these centres are located within the perimeter established by the King Baudoin Foundation for Under-

privileged Districts in the Brussels Urban Area (see map 5.1.).[30]

In the majority of associations, other activities have been developed alongside literacy. Out of a sample of 37 associations, only 7 undertake literacy work. The activities organised by the remainder cover a wide range of areas, ranging from traditionally female activities (mainly aimed at immigrant women), to social welfare, continuing education and cultural or sport recreational activities (see Table 5.1).[31] The relative importance given to literacy activities within associations varies from 6% to 100%, with an average of 26% (see graph 5.2.).

Map 5.1.
Geographical distribution of associations


Places where literacy courses are given
Limit of the area of disadvantaged districts of the Brussels conurbation studied by the King Baudouin Foundation

Another sign of the expansion of the literacy movement is the increasing number of learners. At the end of 1988, it reached 1,529, 85% of whom were immigrants, 15% Belgians, 46% men and 54% women. The number of learners per association varies from 3 to

140, with an average of 18. 74% of learners attend less than 8 hours of lessons per week, 19% attend 8 to 12 hours per week, and 7% attend 20 hours per week. A literacy course involving more than 4 hours per week usually requires paid teachers, because voluntary teachers do not tend to give more than two to four hours of lessons per week.

In order to provide these classes, 70% of associations employ staff on a remunerated basis. The number varies from 1 to 17 (with an average of 2), according to the size of the association and the role of literacy activities in relation to its other activities.

Dressmaking	17
Cookery	7
Cooperative marketing of products	3
Social advice	12
Help with housing	3
Mother tongue courses	11
(Dutch) language courses	2
Information sessions	7
Health education	6
(Pre) vocational training	2
Outings	13
Festivals, cultural evenings	16
Creativity centre (workshops)	1
Physical educ., sport	8

Table 5.1. Breakdown of association activities

As a back-up for salaried personnel, 75% of the associations benefit from the help of voluntary teachers. Paid teachers take a proportion of the classes and/or train voluntary teachers (see Graph 5.1.).

The number of voluntary workers varies from 1 to 14, with an average of 2 for associations employing both salaried and voluntary staff, and an average of 4 for associations using voluntary staff only on literacy courses.

Graph 5.2. The relative importance of literacy activities within different associations

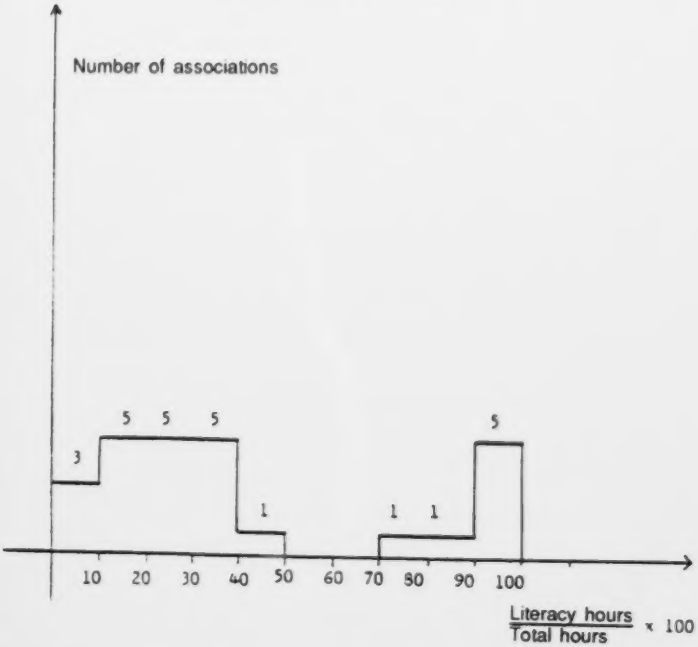
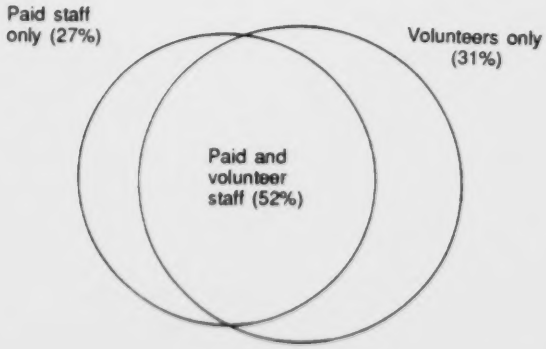


Diagram 5.1. Percentage of salaried vs. voluntary staff



The literacy movement in Brussels is, as we can see, very varied (due to the diversity of the associations involved), but it benefits from its strong integration into the rich and diversified Brussels conglomeration. The Brussels section of 'Lire et Ecrire' coordinates all literacy activities and provides associations with the following support:

- educational material (a documentation centre and a library);
- the organisation of teachers' training courses;
- the coordination of meetings and other activities of the different associations (basic education certificate,[33] the writing of a collective novel,[34] group tours of Brussels, etc.);
- an information and guidance service on literacy courses for potential learners and voluntary workers.

5.6.2. Walloon Brabant

As in Brussels, the persistence of illiteracy in Walloon Brabant became evident long before the 1983 'Lire et Ecrire' campaign. For the past ten years, associations such as 'Ta'Awun' in Wavre and 'A l'Uche' in Nivelles had been running basic education courses for Belgian and immigrant adults in French, arithmetic, general knowledge, etc. However, due to the extent of the problem they were dealing with and a wish to participate in the campaign, a group of continuing education organisers (from the MOC and the FPS)[35] created a 'Lire et Ecrire' coordinating body in October 1984, with the aim of strengthening existing literacy schemes and creating new ones throughout the region by recruiting voluntary workers, and with the help of local associations.

In 1985-86, the appointment of six CST coordinators led to the creation of literacy courses in 27 different locations which geogrphically almost covered the whole region. They included 145 learners and 70 teachers, 90% of whom worked on a voluntary basis. The resulting network included a number of associations which had developed independently from 'Lire et Ecrire', associations which had developed literacy schemes as a result of the campaign and with the help of voluntary workers, and finally a number of small units, mainly in rural areas, involving only a few learners and one or more voluntary teachers.

Very rapidly, the coordination team realised the shortcomings of a network where literacy groups were run without any support from local associations, particularly in rural areas where association membership is scarse and where the recruitment of learners requires a large scale, in-depth awareness campaign among the predominantly Belgian population.

Fully aware of these difficulties, the CST team worked

towards the creation of 'project groups' run on a voluntary basis. Apart from organising courses, their role was to make themselves known in the field, to make regular contact with sources of potential learners, to ensure that classes took place and, if possible, raise their own funds.

Due to the lack of coordinators, itself the result of the lack of contracts in 1986-87, the scheme proved not to be viable on a solely voluntary basis, particularly in rural areas where the running of literacy courses suffered greatly from the geographical dispersion of courses in small villages. During that year, there was a 75% reduction in the number of learners. By contrast, in urban areas, because the groups were better organised and benefited from the support of continuing education organisations which were already active in the field, a large number of programmes were established during that period, increasing the number of participants by a third, and allowing the groups to optimise their resources and to control their development completely independently from 'Lire et Ecrire'.

On the whole, during the coordinating team's 16 months of absence, the running of literacy courses was reduced to 12 locations (from 27 in 1985-86), the number of learners decreased by 25% and the number of teachers by 33% (the reduction in numbers in rural areas is partly compensated by the increase in urban areas).

Their contracts having been renewed in 1988, the coordinators put all their efforts into reinforcing existing schemes, rather than extending the network. Some of these groups are entirely supported by voluntary staff and have been running for five years. As a result, teachers do not have enough educational resources at their disposal, they often have to take on extra-curricular activities and end up feeling discouraged and unable to continue without a permanent training and support system which might to some extent alleviate their task. The work of the coordinators with these groups was therefore aimed at consolidating them, particularly by looking for associations which would guarantee their long-term viability. Unfortunately, these aims were not entirely fulfilled, due to a lack of response on the part of local associations.

The groups that do have the support of, or belong to, an association seem to have very different rates of development, but, on the whole, they benefit from an infrastructure which provides their work with the continuity required, or at the very least allows them to start afresh after difficult periods.

Because demand in rural areas is so low, priority has been given to educational training for courses which were still running in 1987 (class preparation, objectives, assessment,

etc.). The concentration of activities on reinforcing existing schemes resulted on the one hand in a stagnation in the number of available literacy courses (a group was set up to deal with the rural areas and one association developed literacy activities within it); on the other hand in a 30% increase in the number of learners compared to the previous year, which is equivalent to the 1985-86 figures, but with less scattering into small units. 55% of the 138 learners are Belgian, 45% are immigrants, 54% are male and 46% female.

The following educational support for teachers was established by the coordinators:

- the circulation of a bibliography;
- the circulation of educational documentation;
- a documentation centre;
- the publication of an educational document aimed at helping voluntary teachers, in the intitial stages of their teaching, to take into account the learners' educational level as well as their personal situation in relation to their social, human and occupational environment;[36]
- the organisation of discussion evenings where teachers can exchange views.[37]

At the start of 1990, only one coordinator had his contract extended beyond 1990. The viability of the network therefore remains very uncertain.

5.6.3. Western Hainaut

In Charleroi, the FUNOC (Charleroi Open University Foundation) is a large adult education organisation for the under-educated and under-qualified. It provided training for more than 1,000 adults in 1989.

Since 1978, it has been developing a comprehensive training programme which aims to meet the whole spectrum of vocational training requirements and offer the following opportunities:

- a professional qualification, by increasing the participants' chances of vocational (re)integration;
- a social qualification through the acquisition of the knowledge and abilities required to play an active role in society as fully-fledged citizens;
- a programme of resocialisation aimed at restoring participants' self-confidence, reducing their feelings of isolation and guilt, helping them to correctly formulate problems and be self-sufficient in the management of their undertakings;

- the acquisition of the necessary prerequisites for participation in further social or vocational training.

The FUNOC training schemes use adult education methods based on real life situations and the difficulties that people experience; they are closely related to the real vocational and social integration problems that people face. They also include the intensive use of the latest developments in information technology such as audio-visual aids and micro-computing.

The FUNOC has been running literacy courses since 1980. These courses form the most elementary level of basic training and use the same educational methods as those developed for other courses. Given by teachers who are remunerated on the basis of 15 to 18 hours per week, they include classes in French, Arithmetic and Social Studies, and optional workshops in a variety of subjects such as active reading, the highway code, first aid, computer science, etc. In 1988, a training software package designed to improve reading performance was introduced on most courses.

The number of participants has been increasing steadily: starting with 20, the number of participants reached 120 in 1988.

For those who are unable to follow intensive training programmes, courses with different timetables have been organised.

The FUNOC, in partnership with 'Lire et Ecrire', also coordinates the literacy campaign in Western Hainaut. In 1989, it carried out a survey on a large number of different associations (CPAS, local councils, mutual benefit societies, socio-cultural associations, etc.) in greater Charleroi and the Botte du Hainaut, with the following aims:

- to determine which organisations were interested in providing literacy courses;
- to determine which associations were particularly involved with the under-educated sections of the population.

The FUNOC decided to use the infrastructure which already existed in the Botte du Hainaut, inoorder to avoid creating courses that would rapidly disintegrate. All collaboration between specific associations and the FUNOC regarding the creation of literacy courses is done on the basis of an individual agreement.

The FUNOC is responsible for the educational aspect of the course by providing a teacher, while the association concerned is responsible for promoting public awareness locally, recruiting learners and voluntary personnel, and for the practical details, such as finding premises, equipment, etc. In 1988, three such collaboration schemes were set up, involving about thirty people. One of these three groups has now become part of the FUNOC literacy scheme, but the other two are aimed at a specific type

of public (prisoners and Fourth World people) who would not, except with great difficulty, have the opportunity of becoming literate without this kind of educational decentralisation of activities.

Besides the literacy courses provided by the FUNOC and various associations, there still exist in Western Hainaut, literacy classes organised on an ad hoc basis by voluntary teachers, and aimed at people who are unable to take part in the FUNOC courses. These courses involve only a very small number of people.

5.6.4. The province of Luxembourg

Unlike the development of the 'Lire et Ecrire' branches described above, the launching of a literacy campaign in Luxembourg came after the creation of 'Lire et Ecrire'. It began in 1985, with the appointment of six CST coordinators. Before that time, no investigative work had been undertaken: there were no feasibility studies for that type of project in the most rural area of Belgium, no obvious demand, and no preliminary field work. Only one association had been involved in literacy activities for two years.

In order to establish a literacy network, the first priority of the coordinating team was to promote public awareness, to provide and circulate information to the general public through the media, and to organisations and intermediary bodies in direct contact with the target population. This allowed the supply and demand for courses to be matched. Because Luxembourg is the largest region and has the lowest population density, literacy activities are very dispersed, taking the form of individal classes where there is a demand and where a voluntary teacher is available.

After 6 months, there were 60 voluntary workers teaching 120 adults in 15 different centres, mainly small towns and semi-rural areas, the largest being in Athus in a declining industrial area where the immigrant population is much greater than elsewhere in the province. Because of its location, the Athus group had a better chance of developing than the scattered groups of rural and semi-rural areas, for two reasons: on the one hand, its voluntary teachers had more support and were more closely involved in the scheme; on the other hand, the group could make use of existing local resources (social services, intermediary bodies, etc.), it was able to rally a certain amount of support and cooperation and establish itself in the local socio-cultural field.

A number of associations and institutions also took part in the campaign, either by providing teaching staff, or by inviting a teacher from 'Lire et Ecrire' to teach the public they were in contact with.

In 1986-87, because the coordinators' contracts had not been renewed, there was a significant drop in literacy activities throughout Luxembourg. By 1987, there were only 11 voluntary teachers and 17 learners in the small voluntary groups taken together, and 25 learners in the associations and institutions. Out of the 15 centres where voluntary staff had been teaching, only 5 remained. However, literacy work continued in centres which did not depend on the team of coordinators. When a new team was appointed in 1988, it decided to concentrate activities in four centres in order to avoid the problems caused by dispersion in the previous years. The plan was to stimulate interest locally by making institutions and the target population aware of the problems of illiteracy by setting up teams in each centre to train voluntary teachers. However, the awareness campaign did not achieve any results until September of that year, about five months before the coordinators' contracts were due to end. At the end of 1988, there only remained 85 learners (73% of whom were immigrants and 27% Belgian), and 22 teachers, 10 of whom worked on a voluntary basis. Only one of the four centres functioned on a voluntary basis; the other three were run by the coordinators themselves, who also did the teaching. Classes were also organised at St Hubert Prison, following a request from the social workers there. Since 1985, the majority of associations engaged in literacy activities have continued their work independently. By the end of 1989, almost all the coordinators' contracts had ended and the future of the scheme was once more uncertain.

The achievements of the literacy movement in Luxembourg and the difficulties it encountered have highlighted the need for the development of a literacy scheme in rural areas.

5.7. Teaching methods

5.7.1. The teaching material

In 1984, 'Lire et Ecrire' set up an education commission responsible for producing teaching material specially adapted to illiterate adults. The commission based its choice of material on functional illiteracy. Its aim was to enable these adults to manage their daily life by developing their oral and written skills. A whole series of teaching manuals, based on everyday

themes was produced: 'Travelling by Rail', 'Going to the Post-Office and to the Bank', 'When the Electricity and Gas are cut off', 'The School', 'Moving House', 'The Telephone', and 'Food'. These manuals use a global structural approach.

In addition, each manual included sheets and activities that are specifically suited to the different levels of training, from purely oral skills to the development of written skills. Each teacher selects the sheets that are best suited to the level and interests of the group, such as written reinforcement material for oral work, reproductions of authentic documents, suggestions for ways of using the material, exercises on structuring work, etc. The 'Railways' and 'Telephone' packages also include a cassette tape for oral work.

Each manual is designed by an association with experience in the field of literacy, while the commission is responsible for coordinating, editing and printing.

The different approaches used in these manuals reflect the diversity of the associations drafting them, although they do follow the general directives laid down by the commission.

Some of these teaching manuals have a purely functional orientation. 'Travelling by Rail', for example, is aimed at helping adults who have difficulty in expressing themselves and obtaining information, either orally or in writing, to acquire the knowledge and the skills necessary to travel by rail independently.

Other manuals, such as 'When the Electricity and Gas are Cut Off', are aimed more at developing social awareness; their objective is to teach people to read and write by a process of reflection on a particular aspect of their experience, in order to help them to dominate the situation and manipulate it according to their own objectives.

The following pages provide a few examples of the teaching material used in literacy classes:

1. Functional literacy sheet (pp. 115-117)[39]
The pictograms must be matched with their corresponding reference in the strips (these are written in two different forms).
- the pictograms are interpreted orally;
- the written references are placed under the corresponding picture.

2. Social awareness sheet (pp. 118-120)[40]
The selected problem solving situation is that several participants have had their gas and electricity cut off because their payments are in arrears. The rigours of winter add to their poor

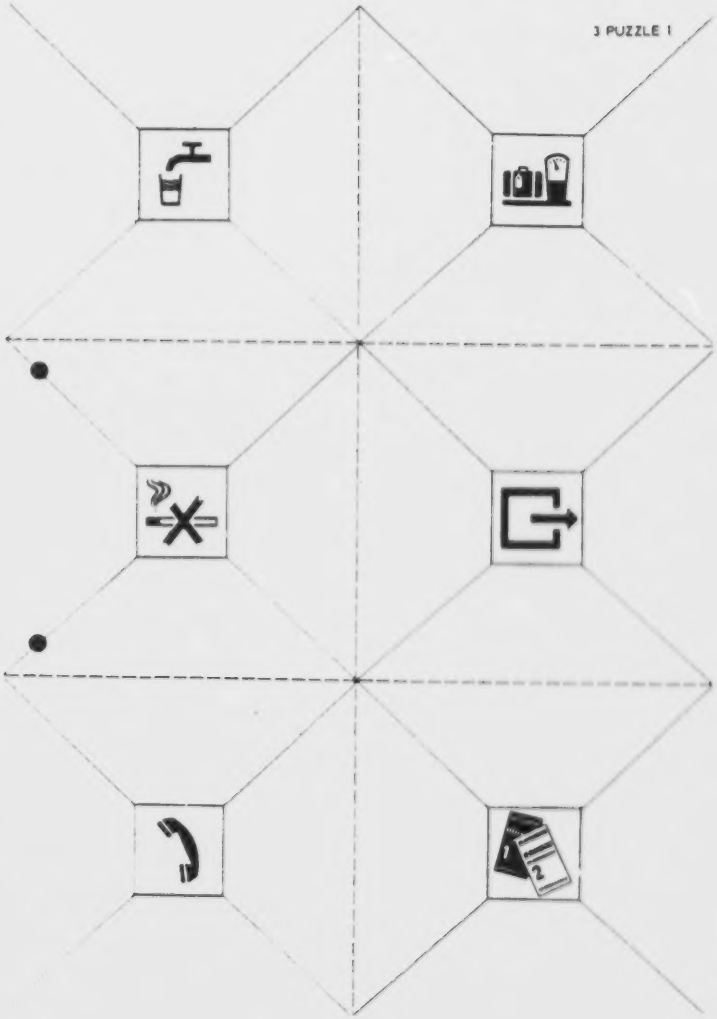
living conditions. They talk about the problem during their coffee break.

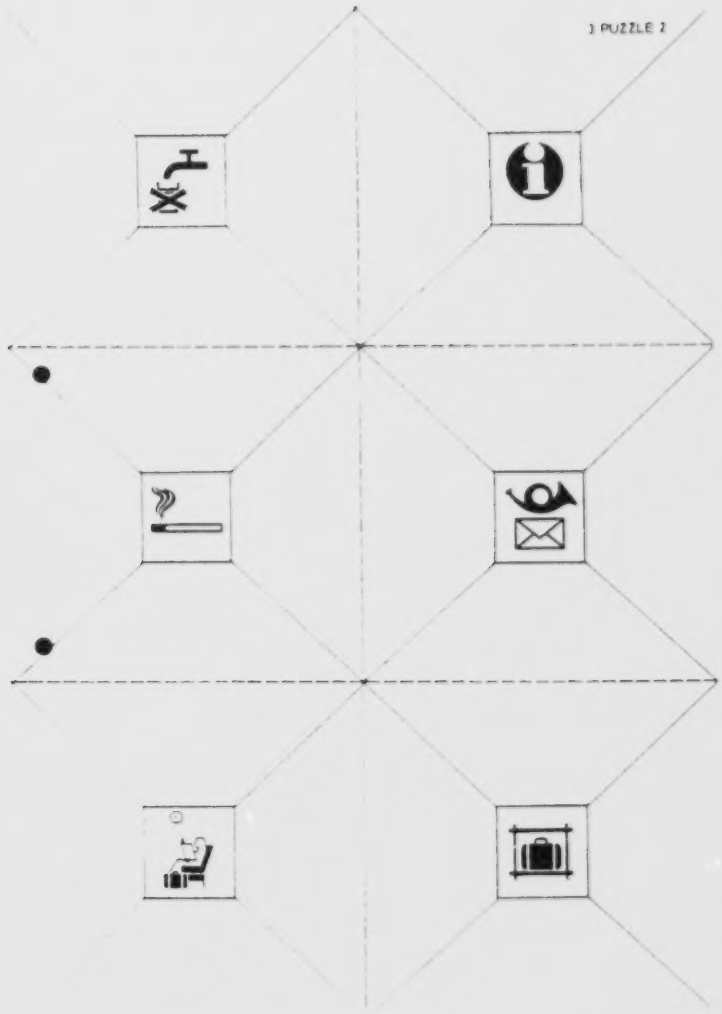
Besides functional and social awareness sheets, there are sheets on the skills required for specific purposes and exercises on syntactic and lexical structure aimed at developing technical skills that are relevant to the theme under study:

3. Pre-required skills sheet (pp. 121-122)[41]
In order to write a cheque, one must be able to write a sum in letters.

4. Technical skills sheet (p.123)[42]
Dealing with advertisements of flats / houses for sale or to rent.

3 PUZZLE 1




) PUZZLE 7

DECOUPE LES BANDELETTES ET PLACE-LES SOUS LES DESSINS DU PUZZLE } PUZZLE }

FUMEURS	fumeurs
EAU POTABLE	eau potable
BILLETS	billets
TELEPHONE	téléphone
• SORTIE	sortie
EAU NON POTABLE	eau non potable
INFORMATION	information
SALLE D'ATTENTE	salle d'attente
• ENREGISTREMENT DES BAGAGES	enregistrement des bagages
DEFENSE DE FUMER	défense de fumer
BUREAU DE POSTE	bureau de poste
CONSIGNE DES BAGAGES	consigne des bagages

Procedure

Stage 1: the teacher selects a photograph showing an elderly couple who have had their gas and electricity cut off, and asks the class what they think these people are saying.

He switches on the tape-recorder, and participants start talking; the use of visual aids encourages the class to express their opinions. P. Freire called this the CODIFICATION PROCEDURE.
Had the teacher started the class with the statement: "Today, we are going to talk about the times when your gas or electricity were cut off", the whole group would have become inhibited, either because of shyness, or through fear of discussing their own situation in front of the others.
The teacher writes on the blackboard the words, provided by the group, that are evocative of the situation. P. Freire calls them GENERATIVE WORDS (a bill, to pay, heating, gas, cold, etc.).
After a group discussion, these generative words are read by each learner, then the teacher asks them to write down the words and insists that they should COMMIT THESE IMAGES TO MEMORY.

Stage 2: With the help of the tape recording, the teacher writes down the participants' discussion.

Each individual participant's comment is transcribed as originally expressed.
Individual expression and structures remain uncorrected, in accordance with socio-linguistic studies that have recognised individual, non-hierarchical means of communication.
A copy of the text is handed out to each participant.

Stage 3: All participants read the text which has been composed by the group.

The teacher invites the class to analyse the first paragraph. This reading exercise is done in silence, not orally, in order to counteract the repetitive and mechanical character of the syllabic method. Each participant makes a note of the generative words he or she has memorised previously. In this way, the text acquires meaning and they are able to form hypotheses on the basis of the knowledge they have already assimilated with the syllabic method.

The text is read and analysed, one paragraph at a time, and dis-

cussed by the whole class. Through his questions, the teacher is able to assess the level of text comprehension. Participants are encouraged to take part in a debate and discuss the various issues contained in the text. These issues can lead to derived or future topics of discussion, according to the problems of individual members of the group (monthly expenditure, budgeting, credit management, legal and consumer rights, health, the role of social workers, intermunicipal relations, consumer associations, deciphering an invoice, etc.).
At the request of participants, some related themes are sometimes analysed in greater depth. This stage is what P. Freire terms the process of DECODIFICATION. It represents the stage of analysis and understanding of the mechanism of self-reliance. It is the transition from a state of PASSIVE AWARENESS, to a state of CRITICAL AWARENESS.
Example: Study of budgeting based on the following premise: "If they are earning 10 to 15,000 francs per month, they can manage", followed by the presentation of a list of different occupations and related incomes.

Stage 4: Once the text has been read by the whole group, participants select individually the words which they consider to be generative words.

With each of these words they construct sentences, all of which refer to the topic or theme proposed at the beginning. This is the most difficult stage and half our learners cannot manage it.

Stage 5: participants read out what they have written.

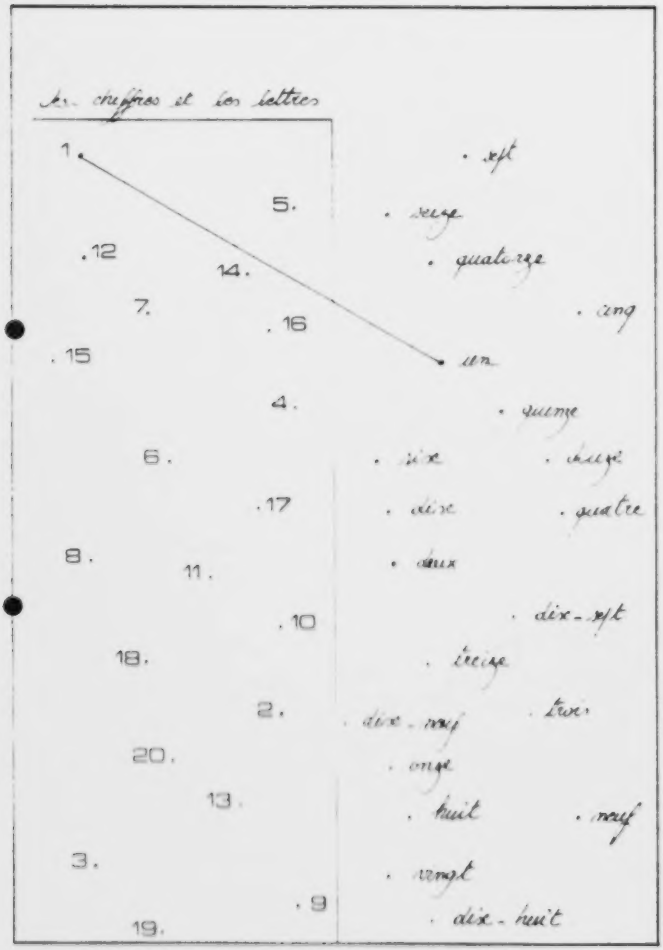
Usually, those who have not managed to write anything can find a sentence to say in connection with the words they have selected. The teacher then writes their sentence on the blackboard and they copy it out.

Stage 6: After everything has been discussed and explained and the problems defined, participants are asked to suggest solutions.

All suggestions are written up on the blackboard and, if needed, participants are asked to clarify their statements. All the members of the class then prepare together possible courses of action which the group as a whole is interested in taking, for example:
- inviting a social worker to discuss the various options which are open to them;

- taking part in a radio programme in order to testify against the practice of cutting off gas and electricity;
- rallying the support of militants who are really opposed to this practice;
- questioning council representatives;
- publishing a manifesto.

Once the group has reached a level of critical awareness, it is essential to consider possible and effective practical solutions. Otherwise, the whole exercise remains an intellectual one and instead of liberating the people concerned, causes them to loose all hope and to become fatalistic.
Instead, their strong desire for change must be channelled into collective action that can bring results.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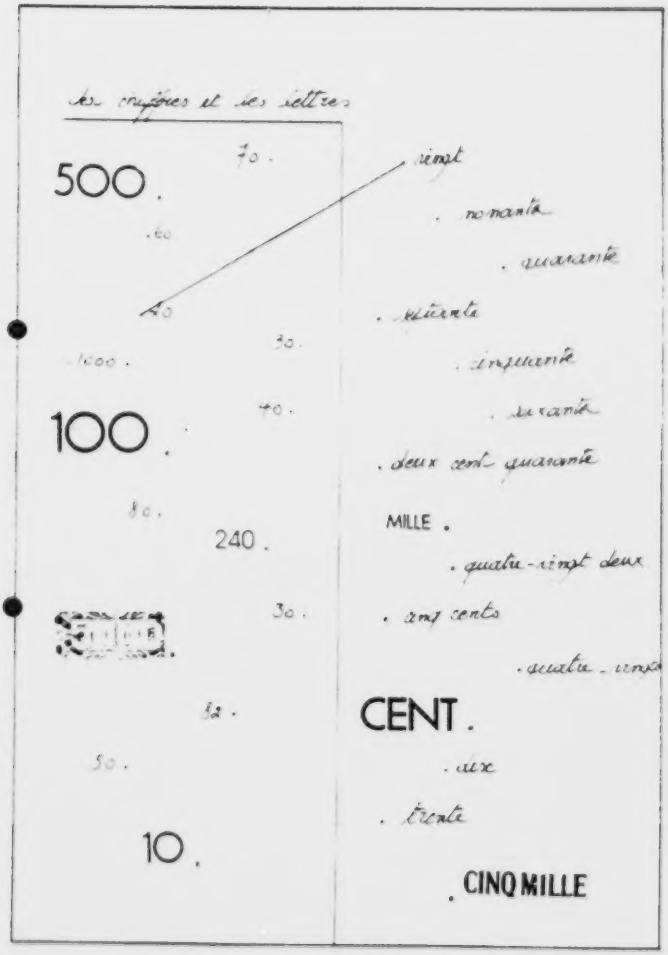
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. deux
. trente
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Sheet L4

TITLE : Spotting the odd word in a list

AIM : To focus reading on the meaning of words and develop logical thinking.

TEACHING MATERIAL : A list of key words: 4 words per line, with one odd word in each - a total of 10 lines.

PROCEDURE :
1) Ask the group to read the words to themselves line by line.
2) Ask them to find the odd word.
3) Ask them to explain why it stands out as different
4) Ask them to name a category to which the other three words belong.
5) Ask them to name a category to which the odd word belongs.

NOTE : Word list M5

SPOTTING AN ODD WORD IN A SET

1. House - Office - Gas - Studio
2. Flat - Kitchen - Commerce - Shop
3. Bedroom - Water - Electricity - Gas
4. Sitting room - Bathroom - Visit - Living room
5. To rent - To sell - To contact - To postpone
6. Floor - Basement - Information - Ground floor
7. Rent - Tenant - Landlord - Caretaker
8. Moving house - Removal company - Removal - Tomorrow
9. January - April - March - Saturday
10. Telephone - Television - Lease - Telegram

Teachers also have other resources at their disposal:
- general literature on teaching methods for reading and writing;
- teaching material produced by foreign literacy centres (mainly France and Quebec);
- teaching material produced by associations involved in literacy work, but operating independently (outside the Adult Education Commission's jurisdiction);
- easy French reading material.

The Brussels 'Collectif d'alphabétisation' has published three documents on the following questions:
- The literacy movement in Belgium;
- Starting a literacy course (the first five sessions);
- Methods for the teaching of reading to illiterate adults.

The following pages (125-129) illustrate one of the teaching procedures used in the last document.[43]

FROM DJEHA'S NAIL TO MAMADOU'S UNEMPLOYMENT
OR
A FEW WAYS TO STIMULATE THINKING AROUND A TEXT

A. Djeha's Nail:

In December, a number of lessons are devoted to comparing European and African celebrations. We begin with an article from the "Petit Ligeur";(1) "St Nicolas? Connais pas!" (St Nicolas? Who's he?), either preceded or followed by one or the other of the exercises described above. This text is closely related to the participants' personal experience and stimulates discussions which eventually lead to individual compositions - in the writing workshop -, some of which are then used in reading classes. During some of the discussions, some participants talk about oral anecdotes that are passed on during family or village reunions, etc. This leads to another type of written material: fiction.

Very few people who attend a literacy centre view reading in terms of its interest or pleasure value, partly because nobody in their social environment ever reads for these reasons, and partly because the difficulty they have in reading spoils any pleasure they might get from the text.

As an introduction to fiction, we used a small volume of Arabic tales entitled "Contes et histoires du Maghreb" (Tales from the Maghreb) and chose the story entitled "Djeha's Nail."

Each learner receives a photocopy of the story with only the title, some illustrations and only one out of ten words of the original text (see sheets No 13 & 14). They are asked to study the sheet and imagine the story with the help of the few

(1) In 'Le Ligeur' weekly, published by the 'Ligue des Familles'.
(2) J.P. Tauvel, 'Contes et Histoires du Maghreb', Ed. Hachette. 1975.

Sheet 12

DJEHA'S NAIL

, Djeha money left. So he decided his house. interested, Djeha said: "I'm selling a nail.

- O.K.

The solicitor wrote

taken out or hammered in.

□ Quand on achète une maison, un terrain, on va chez le notaire signer les papiers.

later, a dead horse

"Take this house."

horse on my nail!

is yours, but

see the Cadi." So they both the contract said the Cadi

"True enough, the nail

- wedding today, dead horse hang it - signed too late -

the whole house finish the festivities Djeha his house .

clues they are given. This type of work is carried out as a group and peoples' comments are written up on the blackboard and compared to each other. In the course of the exercise, some comments are erased and others added. Below is an example of a possible discussion:

One of them says: "Perhaps Djeha has lots of money and wants to buy a house"; someone replies: "Perhaps he has no money; in fact, it might be him who says "I'm selling", therefore, he has no money." "He's selling a nail" says another; "that's crazy, says a fourth, but what's this nail got to do with it all ... and what about the dead horse?", and so on.

Working as a team in this way stimulates interest in the story and, in a learning situation, the group develops a reader's relationship with the written text: "The moment when one learns to read (...) is when one is so interested in one's own questions that the meaning of the text becomes paramount"(1).

In other words, working as a group in order to form hypotheses about a text before it is explained is justified by the fact that it is a similar activity to a real reader's mental activity at every moment of the reading process. This argument is supported by J. Hebrard, who says: "This type of conversation is an effective way of getting a child used to approaching a text by orally expressing the semantic hypotheses that will help him to read it. While this is done aloud to begin with, it very soon becomes an internalised, intellectual approach to language, an active expectation which forms the basis of all personal reading"(2).

(1) A.F.L., Opus cit. p. 15-16

(2) L. Lentin, C. Clesse, J. Hebrard, I. Jan
Du Parler au Lire Volume 3.
Ed. ESF 4th ed. 1983.

After this brief theoretical description, the rest of the work speaks for itself: all possible interpretations have been written up on the blackboard. Among them, unknown to the group so far, is the real interpretation. Each participant is then given the whole text and immediately tries to find out what Djeha did with his nail. All that is required for this task is to "make full use of, and organise, the information that they already have"(1), and to match it with the relevant clues that they pick out in the text. There is no need to be able to read everything. Words or structures that are difficult to understand are either left aside, or guessed, if they are important, in order to reconstruct the whole meaning.

The teaching process does not stop there. Learners are then shown a whole series of story books(2) in the library. Some of them will read them and will progress further as a result. For example, they may rediscover tales which are buried in their memory as a result of an oral tradition, and which they will have a chance to fix in their memory through being able to read.

(1) L. Lentin, C. Clesse, J. Hebrard, I. Jan
Du Parler au Lire Volume 3
Ed. ESF 4th ed 1983

(2) From the collection of tales
Contes d'ici et d'ailleurs, Ed. CLE INTERNATIONAL

Sheet 13

DJEHA'S NAIL

One day, Djeha had run out of money. So he decided to sell his house. A buyer came along and Djeha said to him:
"I wish to sell my house, but inside it, there is a nail in one of the walls. This nail is mine and I am not selling it. You must not take it out or hammer it in.
- O.K., said the buyer. I'll have the house."
So they both went to the solicitor to sign the contract. In the contract, the solicitor wrote that the nail in the wall should not be taken out or hammered in.

□ Quand on achète une maison, un terrain, on va chez le notaire signer les papiers.

A few days later, Djeha came across a dead horse which had been thrown out onto the street. He gave money to some people and said:
"Take this dead horse to Djeha's front door."
When they had carried out his request, Djeha knocked on the door and said to the people who lived there:
- "I wish to hang this horse on my nail!
- What? You must be mad! This house is ours!
- This house is yours, but the nail is mine, answered Djeha.
- But that horse is dead and is already beginning to smell badly.
- The nail belongs to me. Let us go to the Cadi."
So they both went to see the Cadi.
"Show me the contract of the sale" said the Cadi. Djeha produced it and he read it.
"True enough, said the Cadi, the nail belongs to Djeha. He can do with it what he wishes.
- But, sir, we have a wedding ceremony at our house today, said the buyer. This man has brought a dead horse that smells and wants to hang it on the nail.
- You signed the paper; I'm afraid you're too late, answered the Cadi.
- Alright, sir, said the buyer, I agree to leave him the whole house. All I ask is that he will let us finish the festivities at home. After that, he can have the key." Thus Djeha got his house back.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The associations 'Dar Al Amal' and 'Vie Féminine' have both produced a dossier containing a whole series of teaching sheets based on themes relating to the daily life of the immigrant women with whom they work; and there are many others. Unlike the documents mentioned above, these are not automatically distributed to all the associations that are members of 'Lire et Ecrire'. They have a more limited, discretionary circulation.

The easy French reading material consists mainly of novels for beginners and under-educated adults. There have been attempts to vary this material. For example, the 'Literature de l'Oreille' in Quebec and the French Community of Belgium worked together to produce a book with a cassette tape, so that the text is reinforced by sound, and an easy French text competition was organised during International Literacy Year, resulting in the publication of the best entries.

Where the teaching of oral French is concerned, in addition to teaching basic survival French, some literacy courses have adopted the method 'Pourquoi pas!'(Why not!)[44], particularly in Brussels where a number of teacher training courses based on that method have been created. It is based on a global and structural audio-visual approach, which differs from the more traditional methods in the following way:

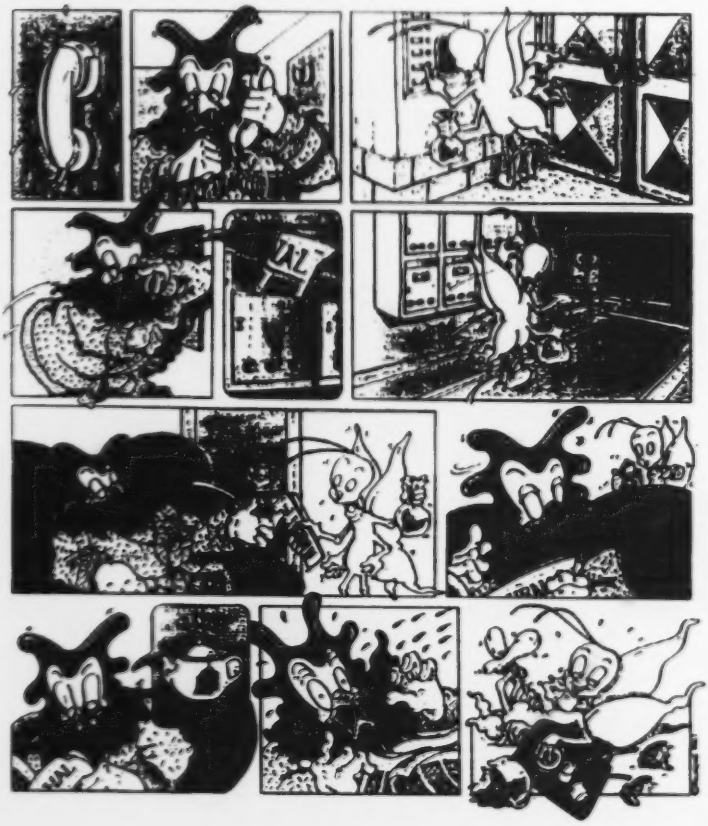
- The structure of the language is taught globally and therefore includes phonology, syntax and connotative content, whereas in most cases the emphasis is on the vocabulary. There is no translation. All communication takes place in French;
- It includes a physical approach to the rythm, intonations and melodious qualities specific to the French language, an aspect which is almost always absent from other types of oral teaching;[45]
- It distances itself from participants' daily lives through the use of audio-visual aids which portray a whole variety of live characters who stimulate learners to project their own experience onto the situation, also stimulate their imaginagion and their gestual and oral expression. There are, for example, animal characters whose different personalities produce emotional reactions in the audience, whereas the traditional method of teaching literacy is to use material based on the learners' own real life situation.

Below is an example of the 'Pourquoi Pas' method:

LEARN TO READ?_____WHY NOT!

Cartoon-1A

All is well



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5.7.2. Individual Teaching Approaches

With all these resources at their disposal, either in the centre where they teach or in the network's documentation centre, teachers are free to choose their own approach and to use the material that they consider most appropriate for that purpose (teaching documents and manuals, relevant material brought in by the learners themselves, etc.).

Broadly speaking, there are three main approaches to teaching litercy:

- the analytical approach: this approach begins with the teaching of letters, which are then combined to form syllables, and the latter combined to form words. It therefore progresses from the more simple to the more complex (not only from letters to words, but also from single to complex syllables, from simple letters to diphtongs, etc.). The aim of this approach is to teach adults to decipher words, analyse them and decompose them in order to reconstruct them afterwards. This method tends to be used mostly by voluntary teachers, including retired school teachers;
- the global structural approach: unlike the analytical method, this approach begins with the teaching of words as signifying entities and aims to encourage (via the use of visual aids) the assimilatiion of a certain number of words which will constitute a basis from which words will be decomposed and others formed and learned. This approach tends to be used by paid teaching staff and by a proportion of younger voluntary teachers;
- the reading approach: this approach is a more recent educational development, based on the idea that to read is to attribute meaning to a text. It consists in teaching people to find a text meaningful by formulating hypotheses about its content and verifying them with the help of various clues (structural, syntactic, and others). Reading is seen as a communicative act, and therefore, the use of teaching material that corresponds to the learners' problems and interests is essential. An example of this approach is provided in a teaching sheet included in the manual entitled: "Quand les illettrès deviennent lecteurs"[46] (When illiterate people start to read). It is mostly used by teachers working in associations with a lot of experience in literacy work and which have invested much time and effort in assessing methods and results. Nevertheless, it is gaining popularity within the network, through teachers' training courses.

On the whole, whatever method they use, teachers try to take into account the individual interests of learners and their particular

requests; they also try to use material which fits in with their every day environment, or material which learners themselves bring to the class, although some methods are more adapted to this practice than others.

A certain amount of flexibility in teaching methods is indeed possible due to the small size of classes (10 people maximum) and to the possibility of working on an individual basis, due to the flexibility of timetable management, to the choice of options, resources, and rate of progress.

A relationship based on trust develops between the teacher and his students. Another aim is to make this type of teaching very different from the school environment, particularly as many of the learners will have experienced failure in the school system, mainly Belgian people, but also an increasing number of second generation immigrants. Because teaching methods are completely different from those used in the school system, the teacher is able, through the informal relationships that are established, to discover the learners' social and individual world and to use them as a basis for formulating the content of future courses. For immigrants, literacy classes represent a place of inter-cultural exchange, which is as important for learners as it is for teachers.

5.7.3. A Reflection on the objectives and methods behind literacy work

In the French Community, the diversity of the methods adopted by teachers is both an advantage and a disadvantage for the development of literacy. It is an advantage because the teaching is not standardised, either in terms of content, of the order in which things are taught, or in terms of approach. The work of A. de la Garanderie[47] in particular, has shown that preferences, capacity for independence, learning pace, etc., vary according to each individual, as do people's past experience, social environment, interests and motivation. The flexible approach to literacy[48] offers learners a variety of different courses based on their learning profile. A flexibility of content is also achieved by grouping people according to their particular needs and interests.

Diversity is also a disadvantage because it sometimes conceals a lack of qualifications, analytical thinking and experience in teachers. There are still very few teachers who base their teaching methods on the end purpose of literacy work. Yet we know that illiteracy is not simply a lack of reading and writing skills (see J. Foucambert[49]). Illiteracy goes hand in

hand with the social status of people who, because they have been excluded from power and from the decision-making process, are also excluded from the need to come into contact with written language, or use it for a specific purpose. The role of literacy is therefore to help people through the transition from the status of non-reader to that of reader. From that viewpoint, all the approaches to the teaching of literacy are not equivalent.

According to P.Michel[50], in order to achieve this aim, it is necessary to identify the needs of adults who might be interested in being able to read and write. Illiterates have established strategies for avoiding written language and furthermore, written language itself is gradually being challenged by the rapid development of different, oral forms of communication.

One of the solutions he proposes, is that literacy work should be cultural, based on the relationship that individuals have with their immediate and wider environment, either in time or in space, real or imaginary. This suggestion is based on two assumptions: firstly, that all adults, whoever they are, ask themselves many questions about the world around them; secondly, that, in an industrialised society, written language is and will remain, an irreplacable means of achieving that interaction.

The role of the literacy teacher is therefore to help illiterates achieve their aim by the use of techniques which will enable them to understand the texts that they will wish to use in the future. Not all teaching approaches are appropriate for this purpose. The reading approach described above seems to us to be the best approach because it is based on every day life, its primary objective being the retrieval of meaning from the material.

This critical approach to the teaching of literacy does not in any way conflict with the flexible approach which puts individual requirements first; on the contrary, it supplements it. Together, these approaches provide learners with problem-solving exercises that are based on their day to day life and that are therefore meaningful. This is followed by individual research work and debates, aimed at developing new knowledge and know-how, while respecting each learner's level and learning pace.

5.8. Teacher Training Courses

Teachers' training courses are organised on a regional basis. Therefore there exist no centralised teacher training schemes within 'Lire et Ecrire'.

At first teacher training was divided into two separate levels:

- initial training courses (approx. 25 hours per week) defined the nature of illiteracy and its causes, made teachers aware of the different illiterate sections of the population, encouraged reflection and discussion on the teachers' own motivation, and introduced them to the different teaching methods;
- further training courses (evening or week end classes) were geared to answering more specific questions or analysing them in greater depth (eg. the history and culture of immigrant communities, phonetics, oral teaching, reading and writing etc.).

However, a number of changes were made as a result of feedback and requests from teachers on those courses, an evaluation by the organisers, taking into consideratiion local and regional facilities and resources. They led to a greater variety of teacher training opportunities:

- an initial non-local training course in associations which have just started literacy work, in order to prepare future literacy teachers to the type of integration problems and work that they will have to face in their job;
- the individual supervision of voluntary teachers;
- educational seminars aimed at stimulating an exchange of views and an analysis of teaching methods, their possible effects and their other possible applications, etc.;
- lunch-time meetings giving an introduction to teaching material;
- practical training classes given by working teachers; this is still limited to Namur, where the regional authorities are responsible for teacher training practice in the courses they organise. The programme involves 150 hours of higher secondary technical classes and is open to employed teachers who are interested in literacy work[51], as well as to voluntary workers. This training does not however lead to a qualification.

5.9. Evaluating results

When it was first created, 'Lire et Ecrire' wanted to establish a permanent (or at least regular) feedback system in order to evaluate the results of the literacy campaign and draw conclusions as to its future direction. The system consisted of three different types of surveys: one directed at learners, another at teachers and another at associations. At first, only the surveys on teachers and associations were carried out.[52]

The results of the 1985 survey brought to light a number of of problems:

- a very low participation rate: out of an estimated 1,000 teachers (the figures are probably an over-estimation, as they totalled just over 500 in June of the following year), only 186 sent back the questionnaire. Only 36 out of an estimated 100 associations answered. The results could not be considered reliable because the small size of the sample did not cancel out specific bias effects;[53]
- problems regarding the quantification of qualitative data. How reliable is this information?
- the limitation of the surveys to mere statements of fact, describing what was being done, the lack of criteria for interpreting the results and explaining them, thereby making it impossible to redirect the scheme's orientations.
- the difficulty of constructing a proper framework for literacy schemes: individuals and associations were categorised according to specific criteria and, due to the lack of response, it was impossible to carry out an in-depth analysis of different theoretical models.

Eventually, it was decided that surveys should, at Community level, be limited to purely quantitative and sociological data for both learners and teachers, and that all qualitative evaluations through questionnaires distributed to the whole of the target population should be abandoned.

In addition to ensuring the quantitative nature of surveys, the desire for regional autonomy was reasserted as well as the need for an independent regional evaluation system. As a result, an evaluation service was provided for the regional schemes: regional centres or associations wishing to do so, call upon the services of the 'Lire et Ecrire' Evaluation Commission, to assess one or several aspects of their development (teacher training, integration of voluntary workers, assessment of teaching, etc.), or to produce manuals for teachers.

Viewed from this angle, the aim of the evaluation system was no longer simply an analysis of regional data in order to produce reports which were read, debated and used by Community institutions. Rather, it allowed them to improve their work either in research or in practice, and provided them with the tools they needed to carry out their own assessments.

In practice, however, an organised evaluation system turned out to be difficult to implement. Constant assessment was already implicit in the activities themselves, but a more rigorous evaluation system required a time and space allocation of its own, and this was not often a priority if one considers the employment conditions and the requirements of the work itself.

In Brussels, an assessment process for teacher training

courses was nevertheless put together following the creation of a new training course involving two-day modules on subjects such as reading, writing, phonetics, mathematics, assessing acquired knowledge, and course assessment, etc.

Another requirement was the assessment of learners at the beginning of a course and the assessment of the courses themselves.

As a result, two booklets were drafted by the Evaluation Commission for this purpose:[54]

- 'Defining the educational objectives of a literacy course'[55] provides teachers with a scale that enables them to define operational objectives (and to prepare exercises which might lead to them) while taking into account their own objectives and those of their learners. This manual constitutes a preparation for second booklet:
- 'Teaching assessment in a literacy course'[56], in which three different types of course assessment are proposed to teachers (observation, co-assessment and self-assessment) which enable them to gradually adjust their teaching to the objectives that they have defined and to their interaction with the learners, who become more aware and active as the course progresses.

Assessment is still an enormous problem in the French Community literacy network. In addition to the difficulties experienced in establishing some form of coordination between the network and the various Community assessment bodies, there are problems regarding preliminary assessment and establishing the right investigative and experimental structures for the effective functioning of both research and literacy work itself.

The main problem areas are the following:

- Getting to know the target population and ways of approaching it;
- How effective the courses are, particularly in terms of the transfer of acquired skills to daily life and their effect on social integration;
- The effect of adult literacy on child schooling;
- The profile of voluntary workers, the analysis of recruitment strategies and the relation between the two;
- The effectiveness of teacher training courses, the training of voluntary teachers and their effect on the teaching of literacy;

Not only does 'Lire et Ecrire' lack the proper resources for assessment, it also suffers greatly from a lack of cooperation with research centres that might be interested in the assessment and feedback problems of the literacy sector.

NOTES

1. The GAFFI (Groupe d'Animation et de Formation Femmes Immigrées) is an association which integrates literacy in a whole spectrum of other continuing education activities, and which has four main objectives:
   - to encourage working-class women of different nationalities to meet, so that they may talk about their experiences and exchange points of view, and talk about their problems, etc;
   - to make them aware of collective problems and help them develop a sense of solidarity in their actions;
   - to develop women's general and technical knowledge in order to enable them to have more control over their living conditions;
   - to train immigration officials.

2. GAFFI. 1988. *Sorties de l'ombre: 10 ans d'itinéraire vers une prise de parole*. Brussels: 53-55.

3. ATD decided to move into the area in 1976.

4. De Kherchove, G. 1980. "Ici on ne lutte pas pour des choses, on lutte pour l'homme." In: *Quart-Monde face aux droits de l'homme, revue Quart-Monde Igloos*. Brussels: Editions Sciences et Service No. 108: 11-64.

5. Kestelyn, C. 1988. "La campagne d'alphabétisation dans la Communauté française de Belgique." In: *Alpha 88*, sous la direction de J.-P. Hautecoeur. Montreal: Government of Quebec, Ministry of Education: 159-160.

6. Collectif d'Alphabétisation. 1982. *Project de campagne d'alphabétisation à Bruxelles*. Final Report, 2nd edition: 81.

7. The press also had a great impact but, for obvious reasons, the audio-visual media were more susceptible of reaching people.

8. This figure is a slight underestimation, because the telephone exchange was saturated from 8 to 10 a.m. and from 7.30 to 10.30 p.m. (exactly the times when the most significant programmes of the campaign were being broadcast).

9. These figures are taken from unpublished DEFIS documents.

10. In 1984 in Brussels, for example, 50% of people who had put themselves forward as voluntary teachers dropped out before the teacher training course.

11. The Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien (Christian Workers' Movement) and the Belgian General Workers' Union (Fédération Générale du Travail), of socialist tendency, sometimes replaced by the women's socialist movement FPS (Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes), are the two main promoters of "Lire et Ecrire", in association with various university groups and organisations closely linked with the field.

12. Carried out on illiterate people already attending a literacy course, and analysed by: Moulin, E. and Kestelyn, C. 1988. "Allo? Bonjour? Genèse et évaluation." In: *Alpha 88* (see Note 5): 175-199.

13. Where the series *On the Move*, produced by the BBC Continuing Education Service, was broadcast twice a week at peak viewing times for three years, on the basis of fifteen weeks per year.

14. Wagner, S. 1982. "L'alphabétisation et les pays industrialisés. Essai de retour du séminaire de Eastbourne, Angleterre." In *Alpha 82*. Montreal: Government of Quebec, Ministry of Education: 209.

15. Landais, J.P. and Lardet, P. 1984. *Alphabétisation des adultes: l'expérience britannique*. Paris: CERMSCA: 27.

16. Ibid.

17. Wagner, S. 1982 (see Note 14): 209.

18. See: Swick, J. 1987. "Le volontariat, tendances et limites." In: Fondation Marcel Hicter (ed.) *Des associations. Espaces pour une citoyenneté européenne*. Brussels: Editions PAC and Vie Ouvrière: 145-160;
De Pierpont, C. 1988. "L'éducation des adultes et le travail volontaire." Paper presented at a European conference on Adult Education and Voluntary Work, organised by the Platform voor Voluntariaat and the European Office for Public Education in March 1988 near Antwerp.

19. Hautecoeur, J.-P. 1980. "Le point...trois petits points...sur l'alphabétisation au Québec." *Revue internationale d'actions communautaires* 3 (43): 112.

20. De Pierpont, C. 1988 (see Note 18).

21. Landais, J.P. and Lardet, P. 1984 (see Note 15): 52.

22. By "political scheme" we mean a scheme with the following objectives:
    - the fight against exclusion, whether social, cultural, political, educational, occupational or economic;
    - equal rights and the respect of differences between people;
    - solidarity.

    (These objectives were defined in that particular memorandum.)

23. Lire et Ecrire. 1986. "Plate-forme d'alphabétisation dans la Communauté française." (Working document): 8.

24. With the exception of Brussels, where five appointments were granted by the region after the January 1989 Regionalisation Programme.

25. Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (Belgian General Workers' Union), one of Belgium's largest unions.

26. See p. 135.

27. From 1978, the authorities implemented an unemployment reduction scheme, aimed at putting to work unemployed people receiving unemployment benefit, so that they could carry out useful social tasks in the non-commercial sector on a permanent or temporary basis. Different types of contract were created for this purpose, such as the CST (cadres spéciaux temporaires) and the TCT (troisièmes circuits de travail). The CST schemes have already been stopped. Before the end of 1990, in the Walloon region, the TCT schemes will be replaced by PRIME schemes, which will cause a great reduction in staff (50% to 65%) and financial difficulties for the associations.

28. Grosjean, E. 1987. "Vie associative et développement culturel." In: Fondation Marcel Hicter (ed.) 1987 (see Note 18): 123-125.

29. Marissal, V. 1989. *Des parallèles qui se rejoignent...Ecoles de devoirs, groupe d'alphabétisation, quelles collaborations?* Brussels: Coordination des Ecoles de devoirs and Lire et Ecrire Bruxelles: 24.

30. Idem, p. 7;
    King Baudouin Foundation. 1984. *Approche cartographique des quartiers défavorisés de l'agglomération bruxelloise.* Brussels: King Baudouin Foundation.

31. Marissal, V. 1989 (see Note 29): 32.

32. A value such that 50% of the data is below it, and 50% above. Marissal, V. 1989 (see Note 29): 38.

33. Since a 1984 royal decree, any person above the age of 11 who passes an ad hoc examination can obtain the Basic Education Certificate, which is the equivalent of the Primary Leaving Certificate. See p. 69.

34. This novel is written collectively, by the participants of different literacy groups, each group writing one chapter. The participants, who belong to different cultures, all understand French and express themselves reasonably correctly. Some have begun a literacy course, others already have basic literacy skills.
The aims are the following:
    - to work jointly with participants from other associations;
    - to give literacy an objective: the writing of a book;
    - to give reading and writing its pleasure dimension;
    - to make participants aware of all the aspects leading to the publication of a book;
    - to produce easy reading material for literacy classes;
    - to get teachers from different literacy groups to work jointly on an eductional research project.

    To date, two novels, *Le secret de Flora* and *Histoire grise*, have been published.

35. Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien and Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes.

36. Lire et Ecrire, Walloon Brabant. 1988. *Cerner la situation de départ en alpha. Vers une pédagogie globale*. Nivelles: Lire et Ecrire.

37. These sessions work in the following way: several teachers present in turn a particular case study from their own teaching experience. Afterwards, the organiser sums up what has been said together with the group, and looks at the various methodological aspects which might be applicable to other situations. There are also one or two experts present, to contribute their comments and to pick out particularly interesting points.

38. In 1985-86, there were 50% of each (Belgians and immigrants), which is probably due to the fact that schemes are more spread out in rural areas.

39. In document "Prendre un train" Ch. 3, sheets 1, 2 and 3.

40. In document "Coupures de gaz et d'électricité", pp. 7-10.

41. In document "Poste et banque", sheets 2 and 3.

42. In document "Le déménagement", sheets L4 and M5.

43. In: Michel, P. 1987. *Quand les illettrés deviennent lecteurs.* Brussels: Collectif d'alphabétisation: 37-41.

44. Sagot, H. and Perrochaud, J. *Pourquoi pas! Méthode audio-visuelle de français pour adolescents et adultes.* Niveau 1. St. Herblain: Pédagogie.

45. The teaching of writing also includes a rhythmic physical component, with music that is adapted to the specific rhythm of written French.

46. Cf. 5.7.1. "Le clou de Djeha".

47. De la Garanderie, A. 1980. *Les profils pédagogiques.* Le Centurion.

48. Meirieu, P. 1987. *Apprendre...oui, mais comment?* Paris: ESF.

49. Foucambert, J. 1986. "L'analphabétisme n'est plus ce qu'il était." *Hommes et migrations* Vol. 1098: 6-9.

50. Michel, P. 1987 (see Note 43).

51. In training colleges in particular, a number of young people clearly need literacy classes.

52. The survey on participants was temporarily shelved following the survey carried out by Lire et Ecrire at the request of the European Commission, in which a large number of learners had already taken part.

53. There is no guarantee that those who answered the questionnaire are representative of the whole population.

54. We are not including here the publication *Cerner la situation de départ en alpha. Vers une pédagogie globale* (see Note 36), which was produced by the coordinating team of the Walloon Brabant region and is intended to help teachers to evaluate the situation at the start of a literacy course.

55. Goffinet, S. 1988. *Définir les objectifs pédagogiques d'un cours d'alphabétisation.* Brussels: Lire et Ecrire Evaluation Commission.

56. Goffinet, S. 1989. *Pratiquer l'évaluation formative dans un cours d'alphabétisation.* Brussels: Lire et Ecrire Evaluation Commission.

6. LITERACY IN THE FLEMISH COMMUNITY

6.1. Introduction

The Flemish literacy movement did not develop in the same way as in the French Community. The political structures and measures which literacy schemes have to deal with are quite different. The current development of a set of regulations governing basic education in the Flemish Community is particularly important for literacy.

6.2. The beginnings of the literacy movement in Flanders (1978-1982)

6.2.1. The start of literacy work[1]

Until the late seventies, literacy activities were virtually non-existent in Flanders. The progress made in England, France and even Holland was still unheard of. Moreover, the political establishment of the time felt that, with compulsory education, literacy automatically followed on. However, since the wave of immigration in the fifties, a number of experimental projects had started organising language classes for immigrants, in particular in Limbourg, and later in Antwerp, Gent and other cities with a large immigrant population. These projects remained isolated; in Flanders, these projects had very little to do with the literacy movement until much later, when they came into contact with it in the context of basic education.

From 1950 onwards, literacy classes were organised in the army for recruits who could not read or write. Those who were considered to have literacy problems by the Brussels Recruiting Centre had to follow a 4-month literacy course, given by an army teacher. This only involved a few dozen men each year. In 1978, a BRT radio programme organised by 'Aktueel' magazine, attracted public attention. It was the start of the literacy movement in Flanders. A number of voluntary workers responded to the problems described in the programme, concerning the provision of follow-up opportunities after military service, and proposed themselves as teachers. Research carried out by BRT led to the creation of the 'Centrum voor Geesthygiene' (later called the 'Centrum voor Begeleiding en Psychotherapie') and the 'Federatie Organisaties Categoriaal Opbouwwerk'(FOCO), which shared a centre in Termonde at Sas 13. This centre had already indirectly been faced with problems of illiteracy, through dealing with dif-

ficulties of a personal and social nature. In August 1978, someone was appointed on a 'CST' basis to study the nature of the problem; the first illiterate people were then enrolled and in March 1979 the first literacy course was created with the help of voluntary staff.

The Termonde project expanded greatly in 1979 and 1980, with the arrival of many new applicants. By the end of 1979, 40 adults were already attending and twenty others were about to begin. In the meantime, staff had also grown: there were 20 voluntary workers, 2 CST executives, and one conscientious objector. The pilot project then established itself as an independent organisation, the 'Pilootproject Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' and looked around for subsidies. Finally, the 'Bestuur voor Volksontwikkeling' of the Flemish Ministry of Culture granted a subsidy of 600,000 Belgian francs for 1980, out of the budget allocated to experimental vocational training. The conditions for the subsidy were that one salaried person should be employed and that the project should constitute 'an example' for other similar projects in Flanders.

The fact that literacy activities in Flanders began with the involvement of the 'Bestuur voor Volksontwikkeling' is rightly attributed by Bert Deruyck[2] to chance rather than to a well-considered decision. Indeed, literacy involves many different administrative institutions, such as Education, Social Affairs, Community Affairs, the cultural sector, social and economic policy and employment policy. Other areas such as Public Libraries are also concerned. In the French-speaking regions, links with the fight against poverty were already well established via organisations such as 'ATD Quart Monde'. Although this was not the case in Flanders, links with the social sector were not underestimated, however, and there was never any question of a global political scheme with a strictly defined range of objectives. Furthermore, the experimental nature of the subsidies prevented the literacy movement from being included in the important decrees on socio-cultural affairs in Flanders. The fact that literacy was seen as a training process caused some antagonism among the literacy groups created in social work institutions.

6.2.2. The development of local literacy schemes

Let us return to the history of literacy work itself. In 1980, literacy schemes were created in many towns and large villages of Flanders. In Summer 1980, apart from the Termonde scheme, there were experimental schemes in Genk, Tirlemont and Haacht. In the

January 1981 edition of 'Werf', a number of mainly small projects are mentioned in Antwerp, Louvain, Zaventem-Tervueren, Alost, Wetteren, Saint-Nicolas, Gent, Ledeberg, Eeklo and Bruges, as well as promising contacts in Geel, Braine, Turnhout and Izegem.[3] In October 1981, Malines and Halle were added to the list. Not all projects were successful however, many of them only lasting a short time; the January 1982 list of subsidised local schemes only included 13 schemes: Alost, Antwerp, Brussels, Geel, Genk, Gent, Haecht, Halle, Izegem, Louvain, Saint-Nicolas, Turnhout and Wetteren, joined by Beveren and Courtrai in June 1982.[4] But there were definitely other literacy groups which often stimulated local public awareness. The expansion of the literacy movement in Flanders will be discussed further at a later stage.

The development of local literacy schemes in Flanders at that time has certain specific characteristics. Firstly, the Termonde unit, composed of Bert Deruyck and Miep Brackeva, took on the responsibility of recruiting adult illiterates. Both of them took their 'exemplary' role very seriously and toured Flanders, in order to stimulate enthusiasm and convince people in all professional fields, of the benefits of literacy. Sometimes, they were contacted by social welfare officers and teachers in the field, who were interested. Together, they set up assessment groups to examine the viability of a project, which then would bring together a group of voluntary workers and look for finance and resources. As far as possible, they made sure that these new schemes also functioned at regional level, so that they would have a multiplying effect. Another important nucleus was formed by the training institute of 'Louvain Intermedium', with Hugo Verdurmen, who stimulated much literacy work, mainly in Flemish Brabant. The success of these schemes shows that there were no problems in finding voluntary workers and that demand was satisfied.

Secondly, most of the literacy schemes were created by social and training organisations. At the beginning, they organised the finance and the infrastructure, sometimes providing staff, until the project was on its feet. Furthermore, these organisations often dealt with applications for CST executives, which provided these new projects with personnel possibilities. In short, the Flemish literacy movement did not happen by itself; it arose from the cooperation of social welfare and vocational training organisations and eventually led to an integration of these two sectors which went beyond their own specific sphere of activity.

The following examples illustrate this development:

- In Haacht, at the beginning of 1980, there existed contacts between the 'Intercommunaal Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Werk'

and the 'Pilootproject' in Termonde, which directed it to the Louvain Intermedium unit. As a result, Intermedium took charge of methodological content and funds, while the Intercommunal Centre dealt with infrastructure. In March of that year, two literacy groups were started (with a total of 18 learners). The scheme eventually became independent.

- In Antwerp, in March 1980, the Termonde project contacted a number of organisations in Antwerp, such as the Sfinks Training Centre in Boechout and the Antwerp district welfare organisation 'Antwerpse Buurtwerken'. This led to the creation, in September 1980, of a number of literacy groups, totalling 30 participants. In 1982, the scheme had become sufficiently structured to function independently.[5]
- In Turnhout, the initiative was led by the 'Faculteit Mens en Sameleving' organisation, an adult vocational training institution, the 'De Warande' Cultural Centre and the local mental health centre. Following contacts with Termonde and the Sfinks at Boechout, three literacy courses were started in April 1980, with 18 learners and 6 teachers.[6]
- In Gent, two projects were started, the first by a small local school 'De Buurt'; the second by 'Vorming tot Bevrijding' which was operating from the Gezondheidshuis. In June 1981, the scheme became independent.

Other organisations cooperating with the literacy movement at this initial stage were, for example, 'Limburgse Vormingsinstelling' in Genk, 'Blikopener' in Eeklo, 'Humanitas' in Brussels, 'Wereldwinkel' in Alost, and 'Info-jeugd' in Saint-Nicolas. In certain places, local authorities actively supported literacy work through the CPAS or the local youth club.

It seems that during that particular stage of their development, the majority of literacy schemes obtained relatively easily a teacher under contract, particularly CST staff. Of course, this meant that from the start, these projects had a great chance of success, but the difference in numbers between salaried professional literacy teachers and voluntary workers, on whom the practical literacy classes depended, was considered from the beginning as a potential operational problem. Whereas, in principle, voluntary workers had an important position in literacy activities, in practice they were often reduced to assisting professionals. In 1982 in Termonde, there was already some antagonism between paid staff, even those with precarious contracts (CST), and voluntary staff.[7] Even in meetings of the National Executive Board, there were disagreements about the professionalisation of literacy work. Those who were against it felt that voluntary workers and learners were equal, that they were committed to what they were doing, and that professionalisa-

tion would lead to the dreaded institutionalisation of literacy; those in favour of it felt that it would ensure the methodical and structured development of literacy and guarantee it as a fundamental social right.[8] These issues are discussed further on.

Another important and problematic issue in the initial stages, was the question of the autonomy of literacy schemes in relation to their parent organisation, and the development of the organisational structure. Although they needed the support of these parent organisations, many literacy schemes soon found that they needed more independence. They also wished to give voluntary teachers and learners a greater right to examine policies and avoid becoming too dependent on parent organisations. In 1980, the National Executive Board also insisted on greater autonomy both for content and methodology, not only because it believed that the development of literacy depended on autonomy, but also in order to prevent the parent organisation from diverting their funds elsewhere to ensure the continuation of subsidies for local schemes. The principle that these schemes should be recognised as independent associations was accepted.

This meant that problems would arise with the parent organisations. Apart from the efforts and the funds they required, literacy schemes did supply these organisations with new personnel, new activities and functioning hours that made subsidisation worth their while. They also gave them a new image and increased recognition. There is no doubt that some organisations hoped to benefit from the development of literacy activities and its potential spin-off activities (adult education, basic education) in order to develop institutionally. For literacy schemes therefore, autonomy represented a strategy that would allow literacy work to achieve its own objectives and prevent other organisations from profiting from its development. However, achieving autonomy also had its negative aspects: on the one hand, it led to a greater institutionalisation of social welfare; on the other hand it could lead to new problems of disintegration, when the chosen approach was a global one; it could even have a stigmatising effect, with the creation of "special institutions for illiterates". In the end, the struggle for autonomy was won by the supporters of professionalisation and those who saw in the institutionalisation of the literacy movement the only way forward.[9]

6.2.3. 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen': cooperation on a national scale and the structuring of the literacy movement

With the development of an increasingly large number of local literacy schemes, the need for coordination and cooperation made itself felt. The role of the Termonde pilot project had to be redefined in accordance with the personnel involved in the schemes, whether paid or voluntary. On 19th April 1980, a one-day colloquium was organised on the theme "Literacy in Flanders: objectives - approach - development". A committee of experts was created, composed of members of the different literacy schemes and the Termonde pilot project, with the task of promoting and coordinating literacy activities in Flanders. Soon after, on 21st June 1980, a second colloquium took place, on teaching methods. Very early on, a lot of effort had therefore been put into structuring the literacy movement on a national scale and establishing rules of procedure.

One of the first tasks of the coordinating group was to examine the possibilities of obtaining grants for the schemes. In respect of the 'Bestuur voor Volksontwikkeling' the coordinating group decided that the criteria for subsidies should be linked to the work itself. On 4th October 1980, the General Assembly of Literacy Workers established a broad outline of the criteria for official recognition and subsidisation.[10] The programme was eventually to become more limited, but its basic principles were the following: all schemes had to have their own name, be legally recognised, and belong to the Flemish Community literacy movement, 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen'. Each scheme must have a minimum of 12 participants and work in minimum groups of 2 and maximum groups of six people per teacher. Reading and writing courses must include at least 40 classes of 1h.30 mins each per year. A maximum two-year grant is awarded for each participant. Teachers must allocate eight segments of their time-table to meetings, and schemes must take part in regional, provincial, and/or national meetings. In addition, a task profile was established in order to reinforce and coordinate activities nationally. The General Assembly also defined the basic principles and guidelines for literacy in Flanders. It emphasised on the one hand the emancipation value of literacy, i.e. the choice of teaching methods based on people's real experience, their environment, their interests, their everyday life, and on the other hand the importance of autonomy. These were to be the guiding principles of the Flemish literacy movement for some time, but in the short term, it was impossible for the 'Bestuur voor Volksontwikkeling' to establish a grant scheme on that basis.

In 1981, work on the structure of the literacy movement continued. During the General Assembly of Literacy Workers of 16th May in Bornem, the 'ASBL Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' association was officially created in order to form a National Secretariat and achieve the aims of the General Assembly's literacy policy. Any scheme which subscibed to the principles set out by the Assembly could become a member. The newly formed association based its National Secretariat in the 'Sas 8' in Termonde, with Bert Deruyck as a permanent employee. In the meantime, a new periodical had been published in January 1981 'Kontaktblad voor Alfabetiseringswerkers', intended to promote the development of literacy in Flanders and the coordination of all Flemish local schemes and workers. After one year, its title was finally changed to 'Werf'.

In Autumn 1981, the Alfaberisering Vlaanderen coordination group introduced a nation-wide CST scheme for 10 employees - in addition to the local CST contingents - entitled 'The Reinforcement and Coordination of Literacy in Flanders". The scheme was approved at the end of 1981. Five people were appointed to the National Secretariat at the beginning of 1982, to provide reinforcement and information nationally, and five more in the province itself, to support local schemes and promote public awareness.

Although there were no great difficulties in recruiting voluntary workers and finding associations that were willing to cooperate, there was still no sign of the first government subsidies for local schemes. During 1981, various contacts were made with the administrative department of the 'Staatsecretariaat voor Cultuur' about grants for local schemes and about the extension of the subsidies granted to the National Secretariat on a trial basis. In September 1981, the Secretary of State, R. De Backer, announced that a commission had been created to deal with these problems, the 'Bijzondere Commissie Alfabetisering Volwassenen'. However, the fall of the Eyskens government in October prevented the commission from becoming effective. Nevertheless, a subsidy was finally and very unexpectedly obtained, although the coming elections may have had something to do with it. A single sum of 1,300,000 francs was deducted from the budget allocated to experimental vocational training. According to the administration, 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' managed to have its criteria accepted. Only one of the schemes belonging to it received State subsidies. In fact, the financial independence requirement automatically excluded a number of schemes, like Bruges and Malines, because they were local. Each scheme received a lump sum of 70,000 francs to cover running costs, plus 2,200 francs per pupil. The schemes which were

started after January 1981 received an initial sum of 60.000 francs. A total of 7 schemes gained official national status and grants were provided for 229 learners. Furthermore, the 'Pilootproject' obtained an additional grant of 750,000 francs, and 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' 600,000 for their nationwide activities. The Flemish literacy movement therefore received a total of 2.6 million Belgian francs in subsidies, not to mention indirect subsidies via the CST and other subsidy schemes.

6.2.4. Conclusion

Due to all these developments the Flemish literacy sector had become, very rapidly, a powerful, well-organised sector which was gaining recognition. In 1980 most of the work centred around the development of a network of local schemes and in 1981, around the national structuring and consolidation of literacy. Central administration was successful in obtaining a relatively high degree of autonomy for local projects, as that was a necessary condition for being categorised as a separate scheme and receiving subsidies. In the initial stages, the Termonde pilot scheme and the national coordination group for the development of literacy in Flanders had a tremendous impact. During the General Assemblies, much analytical work was carried out and put into effect, defining long-term objectives and highlighting the urgency of these measures. Thanks to circumstances that were favourable to the recognition of the problem of illiteracy, thanks to the media and the opportunities provided by the CST scheme, etc., the Flemish literacy sector was able to expand quite rapidly.

6.3. The consolidation of the Flemish literacy movement (1982-1986)

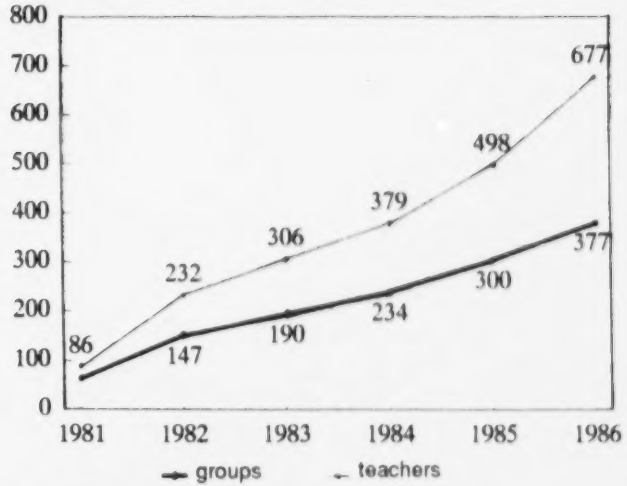
6.3.1. The quantitative development of the literacy network

From 1982 until its inclusion in the Fifth Decree, the Flemish literacy sector expanded steadily, both in the number of local schemes, and in the number of its participants, as well as the number of participants having completed the course. Graphs 1, 2 and 3 show the available figures published in 'Werf', for 1st January of each year. Although these statistics must be viewed with caution, they nevertheless give a clear indication of the growth of the Flemish literacy movement.

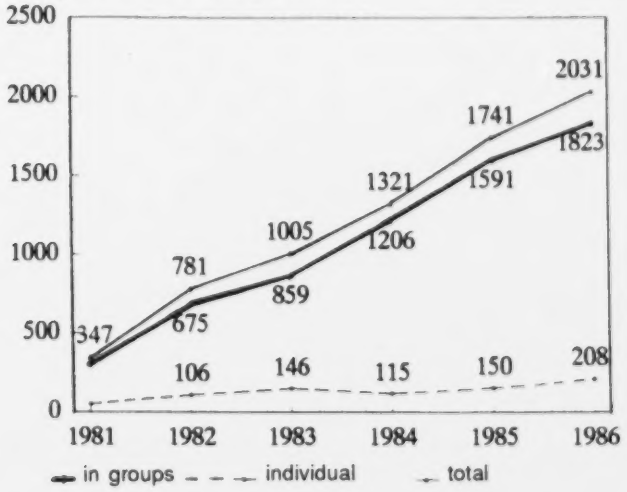
Graph 6.1. Literacy projects

Its growth is mainly due to an increase in the number of literacy schemes, which also explains the increase in the number of learners. The average number of groups within a scheme is about 7 or 8. In practice, this number can vary greatly. On 1st January 1983, for example, there were three groups in the Malines scheme, and 56 in Antwerp. The appearance of new schemes is probably due to the decrease in the number of existing local schemes and their autonomous status. The Flemish literacy sector had gradually extended to small towns. Schemes operating in larger centres acquired a regional function. Within the literacy movement itself, an attempt was made to expand schemes optimally. In 1983, there was a demand for a literacy centre in each Flemish town with a population of more than 25,000. In order to achieve that aim, 32 additional centres were needed.[11]

Graph 6.2. Literacy groups and teachers



Graph 6.3 Learners



There was also a significant increase in the number of teachers, most of them voluntary workers. The fact that it was proportionally greater than the increase in the number of groups and participants led to more intensive literacy work in practice. There was an average of 4-5 participants and 1-2 teachers per group. However, not all teachers actually did teaching work: during the development of the Flemish literacy sector, many voluntary workers were taken on for administrative, logistics and other tasks. In 1985, people employed for these tasks represented 5% of the whole teaching staff.

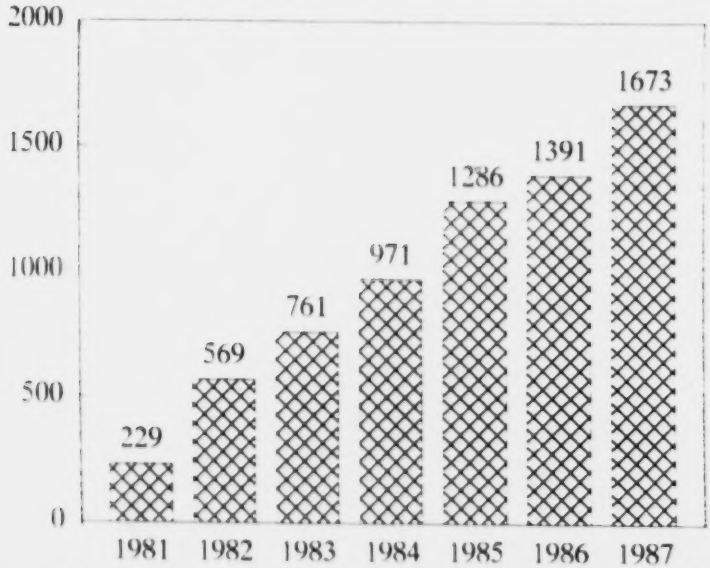
From Graph 3, it is clear that the number of learners taught individually had not decreased, although that arrangement was rare, nor had those who were on waiting lists. This possibly indicates a high demand, that was met with great difficulty.

6.3.2. Subsidisation

The 1981 system of subsidies was the first act of recognition on the part of the authorities, of the existence and the work of the literacy movement. Even then, it was not permanently established, and during the years that followed, it was still necessary to fight for grants and it was a long time before a reasonable and permanent subsidisation system was established. In the struggle to obtain it, the literacy movement's behaviour towards the authorities was that of a relatively reasonable partner. It put all its efforts into obtaining autonomy for literacy schemes and tried to have its own criteria passed. Aided by the growth and expansion of literacy activities and the approval of the Flemish public, the literacy movement continued to fight for a decisive and more or less permanent subsidy award from the State. Graphs 4 and 5 illustrate respectively the number of subsidised participants, and the grants awarded to the 'Pilootproject', to 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' and to local schemes.

At the start of 1982, the financial prospects of the literacy sector were not particularly hopeful. The 1981 subsidisation scheme had been deliberately presented as exceptional and, in any case, it only represented about half the amount that the literacy sector had estimated in its own evaluation of its financial requirements. Moreover, it was only awarded in 1982, which meant that schemes were faced with budget difficulties. When Mr K. Poma, a Liberal, took over the Department of Culture, the literacy movement waited eagerly for any changes of policy that might be made. In the end he agreed to maintain the subsidisation scheme for 1981 and 1982, out of the experimental vocational training budget, and based on the same

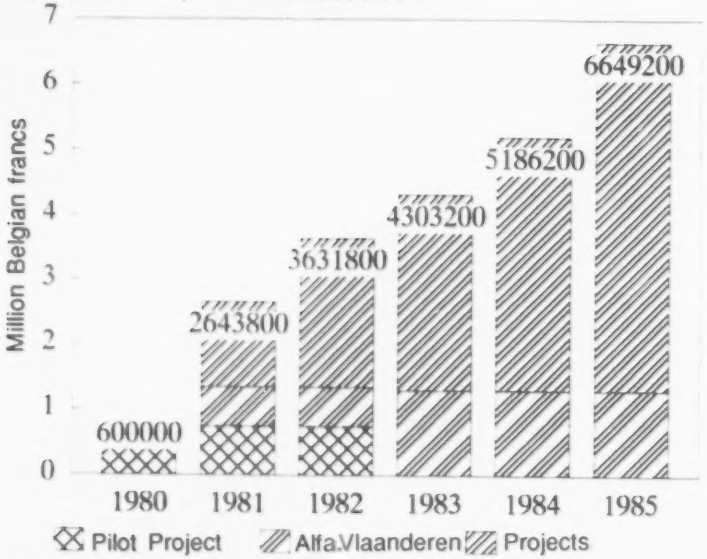
Graph 6.4. Subsidised learners



criteria and amounts as basic grants, participant grants and starting-up grants. On that basis, 13 schemes and 569 participants were subsidised in 1982 and two new schemes received a starting-up grant, bringing the total of the subsidies received to 2,282,800 Belgian francs. The total figure was increased to 3.6 million when the 'Pilootproject' and 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' were awarded 750,000 and 600,000 B.F. respectively.

However, in 1983, the same problems occurred, although the experimental subsidy scheme was due to have been replaced by a permanent scheme after three years. The idea was to include the literacy sector in the new decree on Social Development (the "Fifth Decree"), which was to come into effect in 1984, as a result of which an extension of the experimental scheme would have been possible. With the same subsidies as in 1982 (a little above 3 million B.F.), 19 schemes and 761 participants were subsidised. Some modifications were made to national subsidies: the 'Pilootproject' subsidy was increased and that of 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' reduced, which resulted in the transfer of their permanent member of staff. The organisation lost 50,000 B.F. and also lost its hopes of employing a second permanent member of staff in 1983. In 1983, the subsidy total for the literacy

Graph 6.5. Experimental subsidies



sector was 4.3 million B.F.

This indicates that although there was an overall increase in subsidies, literacy activities had less of a share in it and this of course led to dissatisfaction.[12] Amounts were not index-linked, and payments were delayed each year. Schemes were therefore obliged to look for all kinds of other emergency solutions in order to financially keep their head above water and, after a few years, it began to weigh them down. Moreover, in 1983 the fact that participants could only be subsidised for a duration of two years began to make itself felt; 53 participants in seven schemes were no longer subsidised that year. Although the literacy movement itself had adopted this principle in defining its criteria in 1981, its application in 1983 had many different consequences. It became accepted that participants in literacy classes should decide themselves at which point they had reached a sufficient level in oral and written skills. Much discontent was also caused by the fact that the development and structuring of course work was not financially taken into account; many literacy activities remained unsubsidised. Recruiting professionals was no longer possible except via the CST and TCT network, and this happened increasingly. It was

clear that the grant authorities continued to consider literacy activities as a new, experimental field which had not so far acquired a proper structure and professional development that justified 100% subsidies.

Because the Fifth Decree still had not come into effect, subsidies in 1984 and 1985 still came under the experimental scheme. In 1984, 25 schemes and 971 participants received subsidies totalling 3,886,200 B.F.; 194 participants lost their grant because they had been in a literacy course for two years. Including national subsidies which remained the same, the subsidies awarded to the Flemish literacy sector in 1984 totalled 5,186,200 B.F.. In 1985, 38 schemes and 1,286 participants were subsidised to the value of 5,349,200 B.F.; 200 participants lost their grant. Including national subsidies, the subsidies received by the Flemish literacy sector in 1985 reached a total of 6,649,200 B.F.. 1985 was the last year in which the literacy sector was subsidised on an experimental basis. From 1986 onwards it became subsidised under the terms of the Decree on Social Development.

The financial problems of the literacy movement therefore remained. Subsidies remained too low; each year, the methods of finance had to be redefined, schemes were faced with delays in payment and with the fact that they were not index-linked. General dissatisfaction led, in June 1984, to a 7-day strike: classes were suspended, the ministry was put under pressure, and the public made aware of the problems.[13] It did not in fact have much impact except that the subsidies for 1983 were paid and that the authorities confirmed that the same criteria would be applicable in 1984. Nevertheless, the literacy movement rallied a lot of support from the press and the public.

6.3.3. Employment and professionalisation

The subsidies from the Ministry of Culture did not make it possible to employ permanent staff. Only the National Secretariat of 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' in Termonde had one permanent member of staff. The CST possibilities compensated for this to some extent and, indeed, they were widely resorted to during the first few years. At the start of 1983, there were 25 members of staff with CST contracts. It was, however, only a temporary solution, because schemes were not able to afford to pay 25% of their salary which the promoters of CST schemes had to pay after the second year of employment.

A survey on the Flemish literacy sector's requirement for permanent staff yielded the figure of 30 posts by the end of

1982. A proposal was put forward for the creation of 30 TCT literacy posts. It got the active support of the National Secretariat and pressure from all the political parties and was finally approved on a smaller scale, with ten posts, nine for the schemes, and one post at national level. Although, it did open up prospects, this measure was insufficient, particularly as the 25 CST contracts could not be guaranteed. A new assessment carried out in 1983 showed that the following permanent posts were needed: on the principle of 1 post per 36 participants and one post for three future literacy centres, a total of 39 posts were needed for schemes in the provinces, and 4 at national level. Excluding the TCT posts that had already been obtained, 34 posts still needed to be requested. Finally, not without many problems, but with the necessary support and negotiations, the granting of 21 posts was approved in June 1984. In that year, 31 people were therefore employed on a TCT contract. This represented a total national subsidisation for the literacy sector of 20 million francs. The situation of the literacy sector was similar to that of many other social and cultural sectors in the eighties: they were officially recognised and subsidised by a regional authority, but where employment was concerned, they were subsidised via a national unemployment reduction scheme.

Due to the steady expansion of the literacy sector, in the form of schemes, participation and voluntary work, it soon became clear that more than 31 TCT staff were needed. Another attempt was made in 1985 to obtain 33 additional TCT posts. This time, only 70% of the request was granted: 32 posts, twenty of them part-time. At the end of 1985, one permanent person and 63 people on TCT contracts were working in the literacy sector, twenty of them part-time.

In addition to the TCT posts, new CST posts were requested. Moreover, an indeterminate number of people were employed on even less attractive contracts, such as conscientious objectors and people who were unemployed. Finally, some schemes, such as Bruges and Malines, employed local people. The whole variety of different types of contract makes the number of professional workers in the sector hard to determine.

Uncertainty and precarious employment remained characteristic of the literacy sector. One therefore cannot really speak of a professional expansion, and this particular need was drowned in a series of half-measures and all kinds of makeshift strategies. However, it cannot be denied that the unemployment reduction schemes constituted some kind of solution for the literacy sector, as for other sectors, at a time when the authorities were either not prepared or unable to grant these

subsidies in their totality. "The National TCT Schemes are therefore the only important source of employment, even if they are only on a part-time basis. The literacy sector has come to rely heavily upon them, and, should the schemes be dropped, it would represent such a serious step backwards for the literacy sector that its chances of survival would be virtually non-existent."[14]

With the effective - but not legitimate - transition to professional rather than voluntary staff, the past discussions about which was best suited to literacy were set aside. Some arguments against the employment of professionals were put forward, but management and support tasks tended to be given to professional employees. While the teaching of reading and writing in literacy groups remained essentially the work of voluntary teachers, organisation work, such as working on schemes in provincial coordinating centres, the training of teachers, the development of teaching methods, and the functioning of literacy on a national scale, increasingly became the domain of professional people. Nevertheless, the voluntary staff vs professional staff issue remained a delicate question in literacy, as in other sectors.

6.3.4. The Structuring of the Literacy Movement

From 1982 to 1986, the structure of the literacy movement remained as it had been established in 1981. Local schemes enjoyed a great degree of autonomy and met at the General Assembly, but in practice, the administrative board of 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' and the Termonde project definitely played an orientation role. This was partly due to the fact that they had formed contacts in political circles and were in a key position as far as information and negotiation were concerned.

In 1982, the literacy movement confirmed its independent status by adopting a clearly pluralistic attitude and by becoming a member of organisations of the same tendencies: the BVVO (Bond van Vormings- en Ontwikkelingsorganisaties) in the socio-cultural sector, and the POW (Pluralistische Overleg Welzijnswerk) in the social sector. It was thus clearly opting against the existing 'pillarisation' of social and cultural affairs in Flanders and adopting a pluralistic and progressive position. It is quite possible that it may have used this as a means of sharing the support and influence that the BVVO had acquired in the socio-cultural world, during negotiations with the authorities. Furthermore, the BVVO was the driving force behind an in-depth evaluation of the socio-cultural and educational sectors. Its

position regarding the positive and emancipatory role of socio-cultural activities, based on participation and democracy, provided the literacy movement with a familiar framework in which it could continue to develop its own view of education as a fundamental right. Of course, it also greatly strengthened the literacy movement's position in the socio-cultural and educational sectors.

During that period, the provincial centres' importance within the literacy movement had steadily grown, at the same time as national schemes, but often in an opposite direction. Because employment possibilities had been decentralised, the provincial organisations were able to develop into sizeable centres. A number of provinces established their own structure relatively rapidly. Already in 1981, Limburg had created a provincial co-ordinating body, and in 1982 in Brabant, the 'Kollektief Alfabetisering Brabant' was created around Intermedium and through the impetus given by the Louvain nucleus. The literacy schemes of Eastern and Western Flanders were created in 1983. The development of these provincial coordination centres had important consequences when the Fifth Decree was passed.

6.3.5. Recruitment and public awareness

Once the literacy network had more or less been created, the time was ripe to start recruiting learners and promote public awareness in a systematic way. International Literacy Day on 8th September, instituted by Unesco in 1966, seemed a particularly good occasion for this purpose. Since 1982, as in other countries, there had been annual attempts on that day to attract attention, to make the public aware of the problems of illiteracy and to inform illiterate people of the opportunities offered by literacy courses. In 1982 and 1983, the campaign was still somewhat improvised, particularly compared to the French Community where, at that time, the campaign was already on a wide scale and had had a huge impact. Nevertheless, the National Secretariat received 66 enquiries that year, 57 of which were from people interested in literacy classes, mainly as a result of BRT Television advertisements. In 1984, the media took more interest: in February, as a result of a television programme followed by a debate, the literacy movement attracted a lot of public attention, and during the June strike about subsidies, a series of television advertisements were again shown on television and the problems discussed in depth on the radio, often with the help of literacy teachers and participants. After the February TV programme, 219 enquiries from potential learners

were received by the national and provincial centres; another 78 after the 7-day strike.

In 1985, the campaign launched on International Literacy Day had en even greater impact. This time, a whole variety of publicity methods were used: advertisements were put up in public transport and in post offices, videos were placed in railway stations, and there were the usual television advertisements and radio and press coverage. A survey carried out by the National Secretariat among local schemes on the effects of the campaign revealed that no less than 572 candidates for classes, and 292 candidates for voluntary work, had applied at the 36 local schemes or contacted the National Secretariat.[75] Although the 8th September Campaign also took place in the following years, the success of 1985 was never repeated.

Recruitment and the promotion of public awareness did not limit themselves to media events; they were also very much a part of literacy groups' day to day activities. The majority of schemes did much to make themselves known locally. This could be done in many different ways, but the most effective proved to be advertisments, stands and leaflets, the use of the local media, open days, and enlisting the services of local social centres, doctors, the CPAS and others.

One of the landmarks in the literacy awareness campaign was the award of the Government Socio-Cultural Prize to 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' in 1985. The literacy movement received this prize, worth 100,000 B.F., from the then Community Minister of Culture, Karel Poma; the motives behind the award were the following:

> "1. The literacy movement is a grass-roots initiative. Its objective is to educate a section of the population which has been neglected for many years, in order to fill the existing cultural gap.
> 2. It aims to develop self-reliance in individuals, to encourage their social awareness and promote and facilitate their social integration and access to our communication society.
> 3. The importance of this initiative lies in the fact that the methods that are used are geared to individual experience and emancipation.
> 4. Furthermore, it is indeed admirable that, without any substantial financial support, and without any formal links with the major social institutions of this country, but with the help and support of a large number of voluntary workers, a group as difficult to reach as illiterates are, should have been mobilised so effectively. In short, the methods and content of the training are based on democratic

> principles and therefore constitute a good example of what a good training scheme should be."

At the time the prize was awarded, the Flemish literacy movement received a lot of media coverage.

6.3.6. Conclusion

The years between 1982 and 1986 can be seen as a period of consolidation in the history of the literacy movement in Flanders. The structuring of the movement in 1980-81 led to a spectacular growth in the number of literacy schemes. The literacy sector definitely adopted an autonomous position and affirmed its pluralistic and progressive character within the socio-cultural sector as a whole. However, the rapid development of literacy in the field itself was not immediately followed by official recognition and, as a result, literacy schemes experienced financial and employment difficulties. The absence of official and financial support was nevertheless compensated by the fact that the authorities awarded the literacy movement the Government Socio-Cultural Prize. At that time, the literacy movement was in general quite successful in obtaining press coverage and increasing public awareness.

6.4. Literacy, the Fifth Decree and Basic Education (1986)

6.4.1. The transition to the Fifth Decree

After years of subsidisation on an trial basis, the literacy movement was eagerly awaiting the more permanent measures contained in the Fifth Decree. In secion 4.4.1., a brief description was made of the difficult drafting of the Fifth Decree. Literacy is included in a series of separate articles, which adopt the measures of the experimental scheme. Initially, the Decree did not appear to improve the financial situation. The literacy movement followed these developments very closely and tried, as far as possible, to include its own objectives and priorities in the plan. In 1985, as a result of this involvement and with the help of the BVVO and prominent members of various political parties, the movement managed to have an amendment approved during the plenary sessions of the Flemish Council, reducing the number of each participants' classes from 120 to 80. However, the provisions relating to the maximum two year grant for participants could not be modified.

1985 and 1986 were years of intensive political dialogue and influence, but also of protest and action.[16] While the authors of the Decree intended to subsidise an organisation, the literacy movement was considering the possibilities offered by the Decree. In the end, the regulations governing aid for development proved to be financially far more attractive than the provisions of the Decree. After much deliberation, the literacy movement decided that it would be possible to make several applications for official recognition, one to each of the provincial coordinating bodies. But by doing this, the literacy movement was in danger of by-passing national literacy activities. The other option, which was the official recognition of a national literacy organisation, was once again carefully considered by an expert committee, but most literacy centres opted for decentralisation, which enabled them to appoint more professional staff. There was still some hope of a subsidy ad nominatum or on a trial basis from the National Secretariat.

In Spring 1986, the documents applying for the official recognition of five provincial literacy organisations were lodged. These were:

- Provinciaal Overleg Alfabetisering Antwerpen;
- Collectief Alfabetisering Brabant;
- Werkgroep Alfabetisering Limburg;
- Oostvlaamse Alfagroepen;
- Westvlaamse Alfagroepen.

After a certain amount of hesitation over the provinces of Limburg and Western Flanders, the authorities granted these five organisations official recognition, with effect from 1st July 1986. Each organisation was then able to appoint a permanent coordinator. Moreover, further subsidies could be obtained separately, under the terms of the Decree, for local schemes, which represented a large overall increase in subsidies.

However, the subsidisation plan for the National Secretariat failed completely. Because the literacy subsidies had doubled and the Ministry of Culture considered them sufficient, it refused to include the national literacy sector in its budget. In January 1986, the Secretariat found itself without financial resources. This caused anger among those working in the field, and in May and June of that year, a petition was signed by 5,000 people, a demonstration was organised in Brussels, during which the State prize was returned to the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry was questioned at a meeting of the Flemish Council on 20th June 1986. Unfortunately, these measures produced no results and therefore worsened relations between the literacy sector and the then Liberal Ministry of Culture. At that time, there were also demonstra-

tions against the 'St Anne Plan' which stipulated that literacy organisations had to pay a share of the salary of employees on TCT and CST contracts. Eventually, the literacy movement was exempted from this obligation.

With no subsidies for the National Secretariat, an internal solution had to be found. The solidarity of the provincial centres was called upon, because their situation had greatly improved under the Fifth Decree. Those who worked in the national sector argued in favour of a global view of the problems that the literacy movement was experiencing. The flow of financial resources was now reversed: while finance previously came from the National Secretariat to the provinces, it was now to be directed towards the Secretariat. The implementation of this scheme was not without its problems, since many of the provincial literacy organisations were also faced with financial difficulties, mainly due to delays in receiving subsidies. In 1986, the established financial measures were more or less adequate. In 1987, however, the financing of the National Secretariat proved more difficult. Some provinces did not see the need for providing the National Secretariat with such extensive financial support and argued for a revision of national and provincial responsibilities, or for seeking alternative finance. In these discussions, there were also disagreements about the relationship between literacy and basic education. In 1987, these differences of opinion led to increasing tensions between the National Secretariat and the provincial schemes that were in favour of a national authority, and Brabant which no longer wished to support it.

The Fifth Decree also led to other difficulties. At the beginning, the increase in subsidies and the resulting increase in security inspired a certain confidence in the future. But after a while, the limitations and imperfections of the Decree became obvious to those who were working in the field and began to pose problems. A number of literacy activities could not be financed under the terms of the Decree. Its imposed minimum of 80 hours of classes and a regular presence were often impossible to achieve in practice with under-educated people. Delays in the payment of subsidies added to these problems.

Government inspection also proved to be the source of disagreements, mainly about questions of interpretation. Organisers complained of what they saw as arbitrary judgements during inspections, which had little to do with financial considerations.[17] Many other movements, apart from the literacy movement, were equally critical of the Fifth Decree. It was criticised for being incoherent, for having attempted to solve too many problems at once, for being imprecise in its definition

of certain terms and concepts, and for contributing to fragmentation, etc. In 1988, the 'Hoge Raad voor Volksontwikkeling' came to very negative conclusions about the Fifth Decree and made a number of recommendations.[18] Among them, it proposed the abolition of the rule limiting learners' grants to two years. It was becoming increasingly clear that, for the literacy movement, the Decree was nothing more than another period of transition, and that, in order to achieve a permanent financial settlement, a decree on basic education in general was needed.

6.4.2. The development of local projects, recruitment and public awareness

Although the increase in the number of literacy schemes has slowed down compared to previous years, literacy in Flanders continues to develop. In 1987, there were 50 projects and today the number is more or less the same. As a result of the Fifth Decree, the structure of the literacy movement has been fundamentally changed. What used to be local projects or schemes are now local initiatives. A local intitiative is a subsidised literacy course of 12 participants. In 1989, there were in Flanders (excluding Brabant) approximately 110 local initiatives and 1,600 participants entitled to subsidies. In fact, the number of participants is much higher in real terms because a proportion of them are not recognised by the Decree, for example, those who have attended literacy classes for two years. If these adults were included, it would bring the total number of participants in Flanders to 22,000 and the number of literacy groups to 300. On the whole, the geographical distribution of these schemes is satisfactory, although some rural areas are still not covered by the literacy network.

Recruiting participants is not an easy task. A number of problems have been pointed out by teachers: the difficulty of reaching the target population, the quality of permanent staff, individual recognition, the guarantee of anonymity, etc. The way in which these schemes are integrated into local activities is very important, particularly when the premises are shared with other initiatives. For example, experience has shown that unemployment offices and the CPAS were discouraging people rather than encouraging them, socio-cultural and community work initiatives being far more attractive. The idea that illiterate people have about a scheme is therefore a determining factor which must be taken into account. Another important factor is the approach to literacy used in the groups. An informal

atmosphere, working in small groups and mainly the guarantee of anonymity, can make access to the illiterate population easier.

Where the recruitment of participants is concerned, established links with other socio-cultural organisations such as the ONEM, the CPAS, the PMS centres, mutual societies or health centres, can play an intermediary role. In the last few years, a number of schemes have implemented this type of cooperation and found it to be very effective because, since 1986, it has become one of the most successful means of recruiting illiterate participants. However, this system also has its negative points; cooperation is not always adequate and does not always correspond to the wishes of organisers.

A number of schemes, often working in cooperation with other institutions, have started work with prisoners, for example, suggesting that literacy work has diversified.

The 8th September Campaign also remains an important means of recruiting illiterate candidates and potential voluntary workers, with the support of the media. Television advertising, in particular, attracts a large number of participants. Other forms of publicity, such as the local press, posters and leaflets tend to have a secondary role.

6.4.3. Is literacy an integral part of basic education?

Paragraph 4.4.5. has already dealt with the development of basic education in Flanders. In this section, we would like to explain the link between literacy and basic education.

From the beginning the literacy movement has wanted to be involved in the development of basic education in Flanders. 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' viewed the 'Basiseducatie' platform as an opportunity to publicise the problem of under-education and educational marginalisation, and underline the necessity for a more energetic policy. The initiatives launched in 1985 and 1986 in basic education by the 'Platform Basiseducatie', the VCVO and the BVVO were supported, along with others by 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen'. On 14th March 1987, the Alfabetisering Vlaanderen Council officially took a stand in favour of the development of basic education, with a number of reservations. In 1988 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' sided with the BVVO's proposals regarding basic education.

One of the main principles of basic education, the organisation of local cooperation in training, leading to an integrated and adapted form of training, was viewed by literacy teachers with a certain amount of suspicion. Having themselves requested more finance from the authorities, they doubted very

much that basic education would achieve such an ambitious objective. They were also sceptical about the future role of literacy in basic education. In fact, most schemes wanted to develop a system of cooperation in order to become known and attract more learners, rather than be integrated into basic education.

However, a few schemes did show an interest in basic education and were active in its centres, for example, in Antwerp, Haacht, Louvain and Halle. In these centres, the courses that were at first geared to literacy, were redirected towards other forms of training for under-educated people, such as accounting, 'Opnieuw Gaan Leren' groups, Adult Education, etc. There are therefore many differences of opinion about basic education in the Flemish literacy movement, and they are not unrelated to other disagreements.

There are various reasons for the ambivalent attitude of the literacy movement towards basic education. The argument in favour of integration is that a well-thought-out policy could put an end to the extreme situation caused by the Fifth Decree. Moreover, professional and institutional development are not possible inside the narrow framework of literacy, whereas the global approach of basic education allows it. The argument against integration is the loss of independence of the literacy movement; literacy being a new field, integration into basic education might not leave much room for that type of work. The assessment of literacy courses would also become more difficult in the wider context of basic education. Others are worried that the institutional development of basic education might prejudice some basic principles of the literacy movement such as the informal approach to teaching, small groups, personal emancipation, etc. To reduce literacy to its training aspect would jeopardise its more global, social approach to the problem. An example of this is provided by the Netherlands, where the institutionalisation and professionalisation of basic education reinforced the formal educational approach and led to the creation of courses where there was little room for literacy.

For the reasons described above, literacy organisers are often reproached with being too independent and having a defensive attitude. In the debate on basic education, there are also more practical issues at stake. For example, regarding the survival of the National Secretariat of 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen', there are no guarantees for the creation of a national coordinating centre for basic education. One positive result of the literacy movement's attitude has been to bring out in the open fundamental problems concerning basic education. As yet, many questions remain unresolved, but there is no doubt that

the future of literacy in Flanders depends on the introduction of general regulations governing basic education. 1990 is therefore a very important year for the development of literacy in Flanders.

6.4.4. Conclusion

There were therefore two important stages in the development of literacy in Flanders from 1986 to 1990: firstly, the coming into force of the Fifth Decree, secondly its integration into basic education. While the Fifth Decree solved some problems, it also created new challenges and new problems, so did the integration into basic education. However, the literacy movement was not discouraged by the hazardous changes in training policy. It continued to develop the practical side of its work with great energy and enthusiasm, for instance in the production of teaching material and in teacher training. These aspects of literacy work are discussed further below.

6.5. Literacy courses

6.5.1. Participants

THEIR PROFILE

It is obvious that the literacy movement can only reach a proportion of the illiterate population, people who, according to the definition of 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen', "feel inhibited or restricted in their daily lives because they believe that they cannot read and/or write at all, or at least not well enough." Without a detailed analysis, it is difficult to ascertain in what respect the 2,500 literacy participants differ from the rest of the target population. Many believe that the literacy movement only reaches an elite among illiterate people, people who, for a number of reasons feel inhibited by the fact that they cannot read or write and who are capable of enough motivation to take part in a literacy group. Nevertheless, it has been noted that, more recently, certain schemes have recruited people who were below that threshold.

Due to the lack of consistent data, there is no clear indication of the profile of people who attend literacy courses. However, the few surveys carried out during the 1986 and 1987 public awareness campaigns do provide certain clues.[19] Among those who applied for courses, there was an equal number of males

and females; a third were between the ages of 25 and 34, and 75% were between the ages of 18 and 44. The great majority of literacy candidates therefore belong to the younger population.

The lists of participants in basic education courses, which include a number of literacy courses, also provide us with useful information:[20] 62.5% of participants in basic education (which deals with a wider public than literacy) are women; the percentage of women increases with age; 75% of participants are under the age of 44. Among those interviewed, 16% had not obtained the secondary school leaving certificate and nearly 50% had not obtained a diploma afterwards; 35% of them had repeated one or several years during their primary or secondary education. As far as occupation is concerned, 35% are unemployed, 25% work as cleaners, and 23% as labourers. Moreover, 42% live on some form of income benefit (unemployment benefit, pension, sickness benefit, CPAS, etc.). There are more men among those who are employed, and more women among the unemployed and those who do cleaning work. It is not certain, however, whether these statistics are representative of the illiterate population.

PERSONAL HISTORY, MOTIVATION AND EXPECTATIONS

When candidates apply to take part in a literacy course, they have a certain perception of their inability to read or write, of its causes and consequences; they also have certain expectations with regard to how the course can contribute to changing their situation.

In previous chapters, we highlighted many elements in people's lives which contribute to illiteracy: failure at school, feelings of shame and guilt, various social inhibitions, etc. The following testimonies illustrate the possible effects of the school system:

> "When I went to school, I didn't follow very well, so I had to work in the garden or water the plants. I was even punished for being unable to keep up. Now I know it was unfair, but as a child, you don't know any better."
>
> "We were clean, but our clothes were all patched up. Rich children were put in the front, they had silk overalls. Poor children sat at the back."
>
> "At primary school, I was always placed at the back because I couldn't write. They let me off going to school. At technical school, all was well for the first two years, but in the third year, the teachers found out that I was copying someone else. So I left school and went to work."

Feelings of guilt, and perceiving their difficulty in reading and writing as a personal failure, are also very common. Most

participants perceive their problem as a very personal and abnormal phenomenon.

> "Before, I always thought I was the only person in the whole town who could't read. I felt really stupid. Now I know that there are many illiterate people."

The problems that illiterates face can have dramatic results and lead to survival and avoidance strategies which are not always very effective. The risk of making a mistake, the dependence and the feeling of inferiority can greatly hinder an illiterate person's daily existence.

> "I was doing my military service, and I had promised my girlfriend that I would let her know how I was getting on. She wrote to me every week and a friend would read it to me. Then I would dictate my answer. He was very helpful and wrote everything down. At least, that is what I thought. After a while I became suspicious, so I went to see the chaplain and asked him to read me my letter. I realised that my friend had twisted the meaning of what I had said and told a lot of lies."
>
> "When Y. got divorced, she had to ask her neighbours to read her all the lawyers' letters and all official documents. Many people were prepared to help, but, as a result, the whole street knew of the details of her divorce."

To know of the existence of literacy groups can transform people's problems into real motivation. On the whole, it is the problems they encounter at work that cause a person to apply for literacy classes. Many training officers have found that the aspects of people's lives where they can expect a real improvement (such as work), play a determining role in driving illiterates to attend literacy classes: "I want to learn how to write a report so that I can become foreman", or "I want to be able to help my children do their homework." It may also be a desire to participate in social life. However, the first step remains very difficult.

> "Two years ago, I was watching a TV programme on reading and writing. My heart was beating madly when they started talking about it. I didn't dare say anything to my wife. I thought about that programme for days. Should I contact them? No, never! It would be pure madness! For two years I hesitated, without saying a word to anyone.
>
> A few weeks ago, I was listening to a radio programme, again about these reading groups. But I still didn't have enough courage. I tried once more to teach myself, but with no success, of course. A few days later, I took the first step and rang the service."

6.5.2. How literacy groups function

THE PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

The preliminary interview is crucial. Its aim is to put candidates at their ease, to allow them to express the difficulties they have in reading and writing and to eliminate misunderstandings, for example, by explaining to candidates that they are not alone with their problems. The training officer also tries to obtain a number of background details, such as the family, past education, motivation and expectations, etc. The participant's level is then assessed and he or she is given some information about literacy groups and how they work.

LEARNING IN A GROUP

On the basis of the information gathered in the interview, the new participant is accepted in a group. Sometimes, a waiting period of a few months is inevitable. Classes are given in small groups of 8 to 6 people and 1 or 2 teachers. The groups meet at least two and a half hours per week and decide for themselves how long their training is going to last. Anonymity is preferred. The small size of the groups is essential, because it allows the participant to discover that other people have the same problems.

> "In a group, you can relax, you can discuss your problems openly. At home you have to conceal everything, but not in the group, that's different. Now everone says what they think. We've all got the same problem here."

Instead of seeing themselves as abnormal, participants learn to see the similarities with others. The negative image they have of themselves gradually mends itself, and is replaced by cooperation and solidarity.

Sometimes, the composition of a group can cause problems. The aim is to form relatively homogeneous groups so that nobody feels rejected and so that there is a certain amount of common ground. This makes communication easier, but it is not always possible to achieve. Some practical problems affect the ideal group composition.

One of the main problems encountered by teachers when trying to form a group, is the lack of information on participants' personal motivation. This is not always made clear in the preliminary interview. Teachers are not always sure about why a participant wants to learn to read and write and what topics he or she is interested in. These problems, added to a lack of integration into the group can lead to people dropping out. In order to prevent this, admission and guidance groups

have been organised. In these groups, candidates are brought together and asked to discuss, as a group, their past educational experiences, their motivation, and the topics that they would like to cover during their training. In this way, many misunderstandings can be sorted out before the course begins, participants can become familiar with working methods and teachers are better informed.

6.5.3. The theoretical basis of teaching methods

In literacy, there are no systematic teaching methods. Teachers follow a number of guidelines that are specific to literacy work. The main two principles are the following: 'learning based on experience' and 'working on themes'. These two principles are based on the educational ideas of Paulo Freire. However they serve more as theoretical guidelines than as a basis for practical teaching methods.

Learning based on experience means that teaching is based as far as possible on the individual experiences and daily existence of participants. Learning is not viewed as the acquisition of abstract skills, but as a means of gaining more control over one's life. This does not mean that individual experiences are considered to be unchangeable. On the contrary, they must be thought about and analysed, to enable participants to become detached from their daily existence. This work is carried out first in the interview, and then in regular exchanges of personal experiences during meetings.

Theme work is closely linked to learning by experience. A number of meaningful situations in the life of participants are used as central themes for literacy work, for example, income, immigration, health, employment, money, public transport, radio and television. These themes must be based on real-life situations that participants have to face and which are the source of problems for them. Their importance for literacy training does not therefore lie in the themes themselves, but in their functional character, and their relation to the participants' personal experience.

These methodological principles function more as general guidelines than practical, carefully worked out methods. The choice of a thematic teaching method, based on personal experience distances itself from formal teaching methods based on knowledge acquisition. However, teachers are sometimes unsure as to the precise meaning and practical implications of these methodological principles. In practice, there is also a tendency to choose methods for their functional character. The principal

objective is to improve participants' independence by teaching them to cope in situations where the inability to read and write is seen as a real handicap. In practice, therefore, Freire's ideas have been in a sense neutralised. Instead of being key concepts which describe a certain existing social situation, the themes have become the subject of social action. It seems that such educational notions as promoting awareness and emancipation are being to some extent set aside in favour of more functional educational concepts. Indeed it is very difficult for teachers to apply these principles with people who belong to marginalised sections of the population and who have serious social integration problems. It must be admitted that in most literacy courses, individual problems still tend not to be explained in terms of social factors, nor are the participants' personal circumstances looked at critically. The philosophy behind the teaching of literacy cannot be said to be truly critical or to promote social awareness, as was the intention at the start of the literacy movement. The present reforms, aiming to institutionalise literacy within the framework of basic education, constitutes one of the greatest challenges for the future of literacy in Flanders.

6.5.4. Teaching material

Right from the beginning, the literacy movement was conscious of the need for specialised literacy teaching material. At first, teaching material was obtained from basic education and from the literacy movement in the Netherlands, such as 'Alfabet'. Both the language and the cost of this material created problems. At the time there was very little Belgian teaching material, but tentative efforts were being made to produce it. For example, small and affordable books were published. Texts used in classes were also put together in brochures, which were then handed out to different literacy groups.

One of the first attempts to produce specially adapted teaching material was the 'Sleutelreeks', first published in 1985, containing simple stories for beginners. So far, 14 of these books have been published and new stories are regularly found. In fact, a competition for the best story was organised in the context of International Literacy Year. More recently, a new publication has been produced: 'Kanapee'; it is a series which offers smaller and easier anecdotes, which are full of illustrations.

'Wablieft' is another magazine, aimed at people who have difficulty in reading. It first came out in 1985 and comes out

15 times a year. It is very popular both with teachers and participants.

Literacy teachers also feel a need for thematic teaching material which may help them to work on a theme in greater depth and provide actual thematic manuals such as 'Using the telephone' or 'Income'.

Finally, some teaching material is produced locally and at regional level, usually by the literacy schemes themselves, not only in the form of books, magazines and manuals, but also in the form of games, etc.

During the past few years, far more attention has been given to the development and distribution of teaching material. In particular, a lot of effort is being directed towards the creation of teaching material pools for use by literacy schemes. The aim is to provide teachers with easy and immediate access to teaching material. In order to distribute the available material, special days are organised, when teaching material, often produced by the teachers themselves, is presented and distributed. There is often some cooperation with public libraries in this respect.

6.5.5. Other teaching methods

Literacy work is usually carried out in small groups, but because, in the last few years, there have been a certain number of restrictions, other ways of working have been considered. For example, participants sometimes become dependent on the group, which becomes a refuge for them. They may be afraid to use their newly acquired skills in a real life situation, or to participate in activities outside the group. Often, after a long period of absence, there is a noticeable regression. Also, some participants do not want to leave the course, even when they would benefit from doing so. Finally, in order to obtain results with some groups, meeting once a week is not sufficient.

For all these reasons, new methods of teaching have been tried out in a number of literacy centres. We have already mentioned the admission and guidance groups in which participants learn to express their motivation and interests. Another possibility would be to try and fill the existing gap between life in the group and the participants' lives by organising literacy meetings in various institutions, prisons, etc.

Some schemes try to reduce the feeling of security provided by the group, by organising activities with other groups and thereby making groups more open to outside influences. Other schemes working with more advanced groups offer training classes,

for example.

6.6. Teacher Training Schemes

6.6.1. The teachers

The development of the literacy movement in Flanders is due to the commitment of many voluntary teachers. In most schemes, they are the people who teach reading and writing. The problems relating to the professionalisation of literacy and the disagreements between professional and voluntary workers have already been mentioned many times above. We shall now attempt to define the profile of voluntary workers, what is expected of them, and their initial and continuing training.

THEIR PROFILE

There are about 800 voluntary literacy teachers in Flanders.[22] Approximately 59% of them are employed: 45% in a full-time job, and 14% in a part-time job; 19% are at home, 12% are unemployed and 4% retired. Women are definitely in a majority: 71% are women against 29% men; 68% are less than 34 years old. Their level of education tends to be high: 61% of them have a non-university higher education degree, and 18% have a university degree. Furthermore, most of them have a diploma that is related to literacy work. On average, voluntary workers have two years' experience in teaching. There are not many differences between voluntary and professional teachers in terms of qualifications; but in terms of commitment, there are: voluntary teachers view their literacy work as a form of social commitment, and as a way to make good use of their free time. The majority of them want the work to remain voluntary, while 25% of them would like it to be remunerated. In other areas of basic education, the situation is reversed: the majority of voluntary teachers want the work to be remunerated.

Ninety per cent of voluntary teachers work only with one group, and 76% work with another teacher; on average they spend about 3 hours per week doing preparation work; 40% of them conduct preliminary interviews. A large majority of them have also followed a teacher training course.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM

The literacy movement does not consider voluntary work to be an obstacle to the quality of the teaching. For this reason, during

the last few years, much attention and energy have been put into the training of voluntary teachers, and the creation of an adequate support structure.

It is essential that specific characteristics should be expected of voluntary workers, not so much in the form of selection criteria, but rather in the form of a number of guidelines for the work itself. However, because it is essential that the objectives of the literacy movement be maintained, a selection process for voluntary workers would be desirable. It would mean that voluntary workers would be expected to agree to the basic educational policies of the literacy movement, including the analysis of illiteracy as a social and structural problem, and accepting the emancipatory objectives of literacy work. In addition, they are expected to work for a minimum of one year, take a literacy class at least once a week, follow a course in initial training and take part in other continuing education activities. Finally certain qualities are encouraged, such as listening to people, team work, responsibility, a critical attitude towards the work, etc.

6.6.2. The development of teacher training

The training of new teachers in literacy has changed during the last ten years. At first, teachers took literacy classes after a very short period of training. After a few weeks, a number of provincial schemes started to offer a more comprehensive form of training, and in 1985, the training of literacy teachers became more systematic. In the course of that year, a working party on teacher training was created in 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen' and a training scheme was drafted.[23] The main idea is that teachers should take part in a continuing education process, in several stages, which are: an introductory course, the supervision of new teachers, the exchange of ideas and experience, and the reinforcement of training through seminars and workshops. Teacher training courses are currently organised on that basis in local and regional literacy centres.

For new teachers, a 40-hour introductory course is given on a regular basis. It includes the following:

- An introduction to literacy work;
- What is expected of voluntary teachers;
- Under-education, educational marginalisation and basic education;
- Learning based on experience;
- The admission of participants;
- Language use;
- Working on themes;

- Working in groups;
- Literacy teaching methods.

This introductory course is usually followed by a practical training course in a local scheme where new teachers take part in a few classes. Then they take on their own group. All this is done under the supervision of experienced teachers who help them to prepare and take their first classes.

Course assessment is also an important component of teachers' training. Assessment, whether it is done individually or in groups, involves the exchange of problems and achievements, teaching methods and the practical organisation of courses.

Teachers are also expected to actively take part in the seminars organised by 'Alfabetisering Vlaanderen'. Recent seminar topics have been, for example, 'the admission and guidance of new participants', 'the assessment of individual work', 'mathematics classes in basic education', 'teaching material', 'supervision', etc.

6.7. The success and limitations of literacy work

Measuring the achievements of the literacy movement is by no means a simple task. First of all, such an evaluation can only take into account the illiterate people who attend a literacy group, and not the problem of illiteracy in general. Moreover, because the Flemish literacy movement opted for an informal approach to teaching, the traditional methods of evaluation are not appropriate. The importance of literacy does not lie in the acquisition of technical reading and writing skills, but in the fact that, in the process of acquiring them, participants gain control over their lives. These emancipation objectives are difficult to measure.

However, the extent to which participants' needs have been catered for is taken very seriously. As early as 4th December 1982, a seminar was organised to evaluate the results of the literacy movement.[24] A number of schemes presented an assessment carried out by their participants. They felt that they had made a lot of progress, but still had many problems. When asked if their daily life had changed in any way, most of them said that they felt more confident; that they could ask for information, read certain texts and take part in a discussion.

Other research work on the subject has revealed that it is mainly the image that participants have of themselves, which has changed; their self-confidence and independence are increased. They feel that they have a new role. Although the transfer of

their newly acquired knowledge to real-life situations is difficult, participants are nevertheless aware that, in a number of situations, they no longer depend on other people's help, and this increases their independence and self-respect.

> "Now, I can write a cheque at the till and I am able to copy out a small 'ad' in a newsagent's shop. Before, I would never have had the courage. "Now, I can play word games with my son. I never did before, I was afraid of making mistakes and that he would discover that I couldn't write well."

All participants do not wish to learn the same things. They have different expectations and their perception of their own progress depends on these initial expectations. In 1986, a survey was carried out among participants in Antwerp. It included questions on the acquisition of new skills in dealing with written language, family life, work and leisure.[25] The skills of beginners and more advanced learners were also compared. The results indicated that the more advanced learners obtained a higher score in a large number of skills, such as how to use a telephone directory, fill in a form, write a letter to the family, read recipes or public transport timetables, how to write a shopping list. Other skills, such as writing a cheque, writing a formal letter, reading a map of the town, etc., are more difficult to master.

However, a certain percentage of participants never achieve these results, and a number of them drop out. Figures provided by the Antwerp literacy scheme, show that between January and May 1987, 32 people out of the initial 113 dropped out. Clearly, the accumulation of different problems in a single individual can lead to a series of obstacles that are difficult to overcome. It is the social environment which determines the success of the literacy process, by its reinforcement of the newly acquired knowledge. Apart from the people who drop out, there are those who forget what they have learned. There too, the accumulation of personal problems can reduce their desire to be active in their environment and stop them from wanting to use their reading and writing skills. These participants then fall back into their old dependence, which brings them a certain feeling of security.

Teachers are usually aware of these problems. Through experience, they know that irregular attendance or a prolonged absence slows down the literacy process. They are also disappointed with the reluctance of participants to apply their skills in their social environment. On the one hand, participants find it difficult to break away from their old illiterate survival habits; on the other hand they often feel that they will never overcome the difficulties they experience in

learning to read and write. Thus, for some participants, one class per week for two years is not enough to obtain permanent results. A more intensive and longer course is needed. Furthermore, teachers often realise that they are too distant from the participants' environment to have enough effect upon it.

All these deliberations indicate that literacy work has its limitations. The literacy movement opted for providing basic training in reading and writing and for an approach based on the emancipation of participants, the development of independence and a critical mind; but these objectives are often very alien to the problems encountered in practice. There is a need for a broader approach which would include preventive measures and deal with the structural causes of educational marginalisation. Literacy must eventually function in cooperation with other social sectors such as Education, Welfare, Social Security, the PMS and the ONE, etc. This will certainly not be easy, and may even be impossible in the present and future institutional framework. Regarding the integration and institutionalisation of literacy into basic education, the Flemish literacy movement will be faced with a more restricted approach to training and the risk of losing sight of the many dimensions of the problem of illiteracy.

NOTES

1. This section is based on the analysis of the *Kontaktblad voor Alfabetiseringswerkers* (*Werf* from 1982), and also on: Deruyck, B. 1981. "Onstaan en stand van zaken van het alfabetiseringswerk in Vlaanderen." *Kontaktblad voor Alfabetiseringswerkers* 1 (0): 7-11; Deruyck, B. 1984. "Het alfabetiseringswerk in Vlaanderen." *Gids sociaal-cultureel werk* Afl. 8, B.I.13.a; Deruyck, B. 1988. "Markante momenten." *Werf* 6 (33): 14-22.

2. Deruyck, B. 1984 (see Note 1): 3.

3. In *Kontaktblad voor Alfabetiseringswerkers*. 1981. 1(0): 13-16.

4. In *Werf*. 1982. 2 (4): 42.

5. Jacobin, A.M. 1984. "Wie is an Ooms? En beeld van de kursisten van het Antwerpse alfabetiseringsproject." Antwerp: HIMW unpublished dissertation: 11.

6. In *Kontaktblad voor Alfabetiseringswerkers*. 1981. 1 (2): 3.

7. In *Werf*. 1982. 2(4): 23.

8. Deruyck, B. 1982. "Professionalisering: vloek of zege?" *Werf*. 2 (6): 36-40.

9. See: Van Boven, S. 1981. "Enige opties in verband met professionalisering van het alfabetisingswerk - verzelfstandiging van projecten." *Kontaktblad voor Alfabetiseringswerkers* 1 (3): 19-21; Van Buggenhoudt, M. 1982. *Alfabetisering*. Gent: 62-65.

10. Published in *Werf*. 1981. 1 (0): 19-21.

11. Deruyck, B. 1984 (see Note 1): 7.

12. See: Deruyck, B. 1983. "Experimentale subsidering in 1983: meer dan 4 miljoen." *Werf* 3 (11): 33-37.

13. For a full report see: *Werf*. 1984. 3 (13).

14. Deruyck, B. 1985. "DAC - project Nr. 2227: de jaarlijkse uitbreding anno 1985." *Werf* 4 (20): 24-28.

15. Raschaert, M. 1985. "Sensibiliseringscampagne 1985." *Werf* 4 (20): 20-21.

16. The details of the coming into force of the Fifth Decree is explained in: Deruyck, B. 1986. "Kip zonder kop, alfabetisering en het Vijfde Decreet." *Werf* 5 (24): 26-34.

17. Deruyck, B. 1987. "Elke frank die wij voorzien zou in Nederland een gulden betekenen. Subsidering van het alfabetiseringswerk op basis van het Vijfde Decreet." *Werf* 6 (29): 13-18.

18. Boey, J. 1988. "Decreet dringend aan herziening toe." *Koepel V* 15 (2): 10-18.

19. For 1986 and 1987 see: *Werf* 5 (25): 7-11; 6 (30): 6-10.

20. Verdurmen, H. 1989. "Laaggeschoolde volwassenen en deelname aan onderwijs en vorming." *Gids sociaal-cultureel werk* Afl. 24, A.IV.1.d.

21. The source of the following quotations is not precisely known. They come from various publications and internal documents of Alfabetisering Vlaanderen.

22. This section is based on the work of: Hinnekint, B. 1987. "Begeleiders en begeleidsters in de basiseducatie voor volwassenen in Vlaanderen anno 1987." In graph 6.2 we mentioned 677 voluntary workers. In his research on basic education teachers, Hinnekint mentions 783 voluntary workers. Alfabetisering Vlaanderen mentions 880 voluntary workers in 1989 - see: Adriaensens, E. 1990. "De problematiek van het analfabetisme." In: Baert, H. and Ponjaert, I. (eds.) *Wij nemen de handschoen op!. 1990 Internationaal Jaar van de strijd tegen het analfabetisme*. Dendermonde: Alfabetisering Vlaanderen and King Baudouin Foundation: 11.

23. Adriaensens, E. 1985. *Deskundigheidsbevordering in het alfabetiseringswerk*. Dendermonde: Alfabetisering Vlaanderen.

24. See *Werf*. 1983. Vol. 2 (special edition).

25. Peeters, L. 1987. "Hoop doet lezen. Over analfabetisme en het alfabetiseringswerk in Vlaanderen." Antwerp: UIA unpublished dissertation;
Geussens, M. 1989. "Evaluatie van de effecten van het alfabetiseringswerk in Limburg bij exdeelnemers van lees- en schrijfgroepen." Leuven: KUL unpublished dissertation.

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